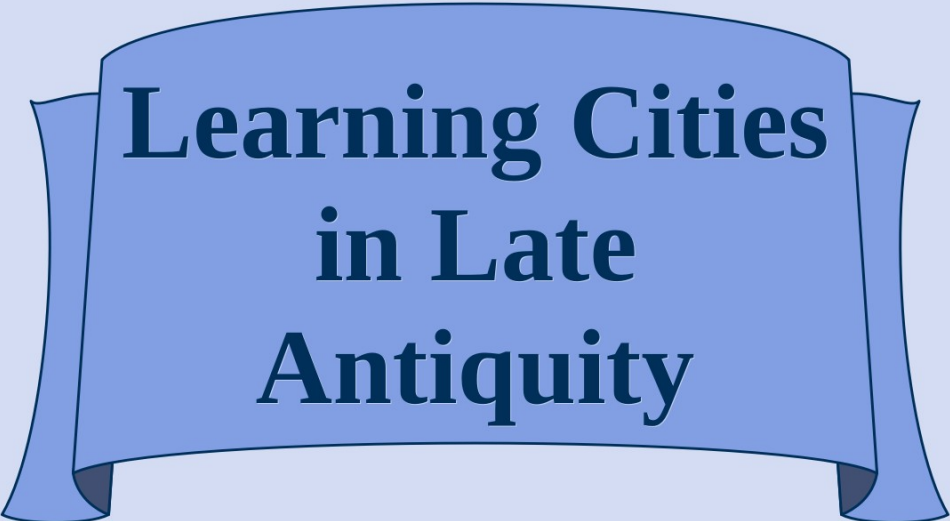


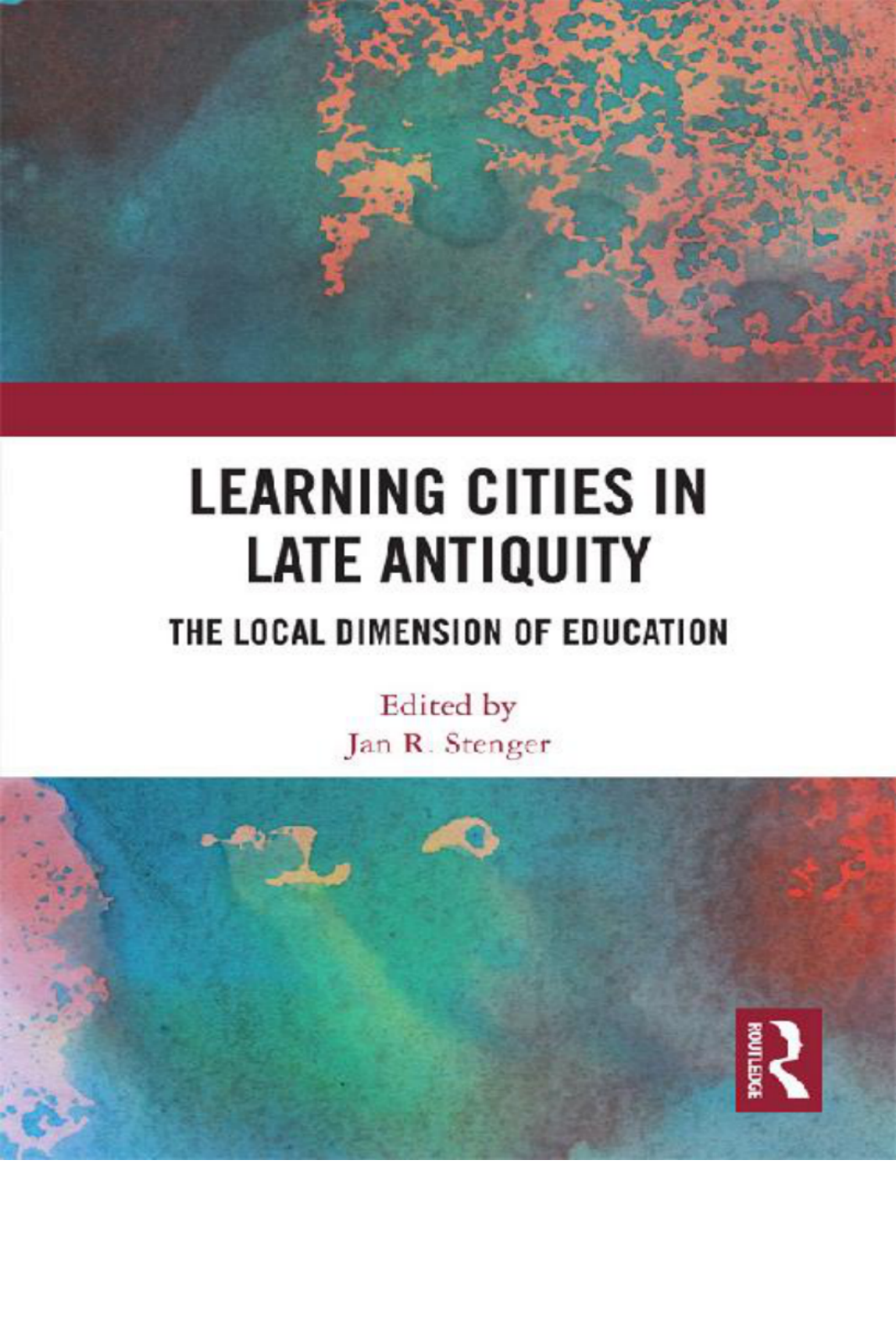


Learning Cities in Late Antiquity

Jan R. Stenger

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LEARNING CITIES IN LATE ANTIQUITY

THE LOCAL DIMENSION OF EDUCATION

Edited by
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Education in the Graeco-Roman world was a hallmark of the polis. Yet the complex ways in which pedagogical theory and practice intersected with their local environments has not been much explored in recent scholarship. *Learning Cities in Late Antiquity* suggests a new explanatory model that helps to understand better how conditions in the cities shaped learning and teaching, and how, in turn, education had an impact on its urban context.

Drawing inspiration from the modern idea of ‘learning cities’, the chapters explore the interplay of teachers, learners, political leaders, communities and institutions in the Mediterranean polis, with a focus on the well-documented city of Gaza in the sixth century CE. They demonstrate in detail that formal and informal teaching, as well as educational thinking, not only responded to specifically local needs but also exerted considerable influence on local society.

With its interdisciplinary and comparatist approach, the volume aims to contextualise ancient education in order to stimulate further research on ancient learning cities. It also highlights the benefits of historical research to theory and practice in modern education.

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Learning Cities in Late Antiquity

The Local Dimension of Education

Edited by
Jan R. Stenger

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Preface

This volume is based around papers presented at a workshop held at the University of Glasgow in August 2014, with an additional contribution by Michael W. Champion on education in Gazan monasticism. The workshop and the publication, as well as a preparatory symposium, were made possible by the generous financial support of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE Arts & Humanities Research Workshops). In preparing and editing the collection I benefited from fellowships at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies in 2015/2016; at the Cluster of Excellence 264 'Topoi', Berlin in summer 2017; and at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in 2017/2018. I would like to express my gratitude to these institutions and to the EURIAS Fellowship Programme, which funded the fellowship period in Helsinki (co-funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, under the 7th Framework Programme).

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Jan R. Stenger
Uppsala, April 2018

Learning cities

A novel approach to ancient *paideia*

Jan R. Stenger

Polis and *paideia*

Still in late antiquity, separated by eight centuries from the great teachers Plato and Aristotle, the city of Athens continued to enthrall young men who were drawn by the call of philosophy. Deeply rooted in their minds was the belief that the classical polis was the epitome of *paideia*, the characteristically Greek way of learning. One of these expectant students was Proclus (412–485 CE), born in Constantinople to a family of high social status, who was going to become head of the venerable Academy. Thanks to the hagiographic *Life of Proclus*, written by the Neoplatonic scholar Marinus of Neapolis, we can imagine the impact that Athens had on Proclus' intellectual and spiritual formation. Indeed, throughout the account of the philosopher's life the city figures as the place where he attained the consummation of his studies, took active part in civic affairs and eventually rose to superhuman status. Right from his student days, it is self-evident that the Neoplatonic saint can achieve his fulfilment only in the place that is imbued with the aura of his great forebears, from Plato to Proclus' teacher, Syrianus:

[Proclus] set off for Athens, escorted by all the oracles and the gods and good daemons who are custodians of philosophy. For in order that the succession from Plato might be preserved genuine and pure, the gods were leading him towards the custodian of philosophy [Athens]. This was proved manifestly by the events leading up to his residence, and the truly divine omens that clearly predicted the inheritance from his father and the succession to the school decreed from above.¹

As soon as Proclus, guided by divine Providence, enters the city it is clear that his philosophical teaching and religious devotion will bring the seemingly inevitable downfall of Athens to a halt. Over the course of Marinus' biography we see Proclus engaging in politics, counselling and teaching the Athenian people for their common welfare, and

putting his stamp on the religious life of the polis.² Naturally, he is in the end hailed by none other than the god Asclepius as ‘the glory of the city’.³ Apart from other important layers of meaning, the *Life of Proclus* conveys the idea that the teaching intellectual is an eminently public figure whose expertise and benevolence are indispensable for the well-being of the civic community. In a cityscape interlaced with symbolic meanings and values, the saintly philosopher constantly demonstrates that Athens is unthinkable without the Academy, and vice versa.

Another, but in some respects similar, picture of Athens as a Mecca of learning is conjured up in the philosophical dialogue *Theophrastus*, written by the scholar Aeneas of Gaza (end of the fifth century). Unlike Proclus’ life, the conversation between the pagan philosopher Theophrastus, the Christian student Euxitheus and his friend Aegyptus does not take place in the Greek capital. Yet Athens as the mother of philosophy is constantly in the background of the eristic discussion of the creation of the cosmos and the immortality of the soul, most prominently in the opening part. There we find Euxitheus, who is on a journey to Greece, talking to his student friend Aegyptus in Alexandria about his plans to study with the pre-eminent philosophers in Athens. However, it soon turns out that Euxitheus is to be spared from continuing his trip:

AEGYPTUS Back then all was fine, but now that is gone and come to an end. [...] The *orchestra* and the horse-race are thriving, while philosophy and the homes of the Muses have sunk into terrible stillness.

EUXITHEUS As I myself suspected this I bypassed Egypt and was heading to Athens, to see if there was somehow any wise man left among the Athenians. [...]

AEGYPTUS But you have in fact gained Athens, my friend. For if you want to see neither the Acropolis nor the Propylaea nor the dockyards, but a wise man, then Theophrastus, the great glory of the Athenians, has arrived among us and has been here the third day already. [...] For neither among the Athenians nor among any others can one meet anyone wiser than Theophrastus.

EUXITHEUS You are describing a god-send, if I should find along the Nile the philosophy of the Athenians, so that I do not have to travel the wide sea to learn these things. [...] There was no point, then, in my journey to the Athenians, if, as you say, no one of any worth remains to respond to my inquiry. But it was not in vain that I broke off my journey, if in accordance with some divine favour, I find at the Nile the one who is pre-eminent in philosophy and the best of the Athenians.⁴

Traditional philosophical schooling is, Aegyptus claims, in steep decline, not least because of the mediocrity of teachers and the students' lack of commitment to learning. Yet, strikingly, the passage bears witness to the fact that in the eyes of fifth-century educated men Athens is still credited with a particular type and level of *paideia*, though the intellectual rigour of the Athenian philosophers belongs to a bygone era. That philosophy is said to have relocated to Alexandria nicely encapsulates, on the one hand, the rootedness of learning in famous metropolises and, on the other hand, the dependence of studies on the presence of distinguished scholars. In addition, Aeneas' *Theophrastus*, to no less degree than his letters, points to the importance of student travel at the time and, further, to that of student experience and networking.⁵ Differences in genre, style and intentions notwithstanding, both Marinus' *Life of Proclus* and Aeneas' dialogue reflect full awareness of the local dimension of teaching and learning.

This volume investigates the significant correlation between polis and education during the period of late antiquity. It focusses on one particularly illuminating case: the city of Gaza in Palestine. A number of key questions will be addressed in order to gain insight into the nature of the, as Robert Kaster puts it, 'archipelago of cities where schools of liberal letters were to be found'⁶: above all, we shall consider what exactly it means to posit a symbiotic union of learning and city. How is this interplay spelled out in the daily life of schools and cities? An answer to this question requires an in-depth examination of the precise place of learning within the polis, 'place' being defined in multiple dimensions as physical, social, economic and so on. Further, we need to identify the agents and factors which are involved in the interplay and the ways in which they intersect. Since education is comprised of not only practices but also ideas and theories, it is important to explore the notions of learning, individual, community and society that flow from the symbiosis. Finally, in what ways do learning and the ambient conditions correlate; does education alter the face of its place in significant ways; and, if so, how does it do so? Consideration of these questions will open up new avenues beyond the tacit assumption that the ancient city simply provided the physical environment for learning. In order to better understand how ancient cities informed the intellectual life that flourished within their walls, and vice versa, we may draw inspiration from a recent approach that has put the local dimension of learning on the map.

Learning cities

Education and learning are at the forefront of current debates across the globe, from governments' considerations of how to prepare states

for future challenges to non-governmental organisations (NGOs)' disseminating their ideas on building inclusive societies by widening access and participation in learning. What is remarkable in this globalised education discourse is the stress on cities or local communities, running as a thread through many statements, strategies and publications. One notion in particular has increasingly gained in popularity over the last decades: that of learning cities and regions.⁷ This idea, which encapsulates the strong link between education and its civic context, has even been made a cornerstone of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s mission to improve people's living conditions around the world.⁸ As evidence of its universal appeal, over 1,000 cities have joined the UNESCO initiative in the meantime and market themselves as learning cities, as is manifest in the worldwide network stretching from Beijing to Mexico City, from Espoo in Finland to Melton in Australia.⁹ Despite its enormous attractiveness and stimulating force, the notion of learning cities or regions is rather loosely defined, as can already be guessed from the huge variation among the cities just mentioned.

Yet some core features emerge. According to what has become a semi-official definition, learning cities are characterised by inclusive learning from elementary to higher education, a revitalisation of learning in families and communities, enhancing learning in and for the workplace, the use of modern learning technologies and the quest for quality and excellence in learning.¹⁰ Chief among the defining features, however, is the idea of lifelong learning, which has the potential to transform the urban society into a community of learners, regardless of age, class, gender and other distinctions. How important the concept of learning throughout life has become in the education sector is also visible in the attention it has received from, among others, UNESCO and the European Commission.¹¹ With their broad scope, as enshrined in the internationally agreed constitutive features, the learning cities initiatives can attain their goals and reach out to their beneficiaries only if they bring together a great number of diverse stakeholders: the implementation and further development of effective measures naturally require the close partnership of public authorities, private enterprises, education and research institutions, civic organisations and key individuals. These partners commit to long-term collaboration in order to make possible the prosperity of not only the civic community but also the individuals living there.

The global network of learning cities and its underlying ideology clearly owe their rise to the challenges faced by urban centres and regions of any scale in a globalising world. In a fast-changing environment with its host of uncertainties the idea of lifelong learning is seen to address many of the burning issues in our societies because

citizens who acquire knowledge and skills in a wide range of contexts are believed to be better equipped to adapt to any changes. Building on such ideal citizen-learners, stakeholders in learning cities schemes seek to facilitate a sustainable social, economic and environmental development of the civic body and simultaneously seek the empowerment of individuals. What drives these ambitious objectives is evidently the belief in education as a powerful mechanism in engineering society and stimulating economic growth. Deeply woven into the fabric of learning cities is the now widespread paradigm of educationalisation, according to which education is the key to solving urgent social problems, for example, race, class and gender inequality, public health problems and crime.¹² It is beyond the scope and intentions of this introduction to discuss whether or not education is successful in carrying out these missions. But it is relevant here to note that all these agendas either explicitly or tacitly rest on the assumption that the implementation of adequate measures must start at a local level. Although every city is unique, and, on the surface, Beijing and Espoo have little in common, the main objectives, such as social cohesion, cultural prosperity and the empowerment of individuals, are evidently shared by many a civic community around the globe and cannot be attained unless the local stakeholders play an active role in the process.

Against this backdrop it is unsurprising that the public debate, as well as academic research, on learning cities is dominated by current concerns and is profoundly ahistorical. And yet the complex interplay of educational activities and their urban environment has a long pedigree. The localisation of the acquisition of knowledge and skills made its presence felt in former periods and distant civilisations too: for example in early modern university towns.¹³ In light of the interdependence of higher education and the city on various levels throughout the centuries it seems promising to bring the two strands of research, the one on modern 'learning cities' and the one on historical cities of learning, together, for the benefit of both. The diachronic perspective on the local dimension of schooling, augmented by cross-cultural comparison, could raise our awareness of similarities and differences in challenges, decisive factors, configurations and approaches in the field of learning. A look at how historical societies and stakeholders in education tried to address through learning issues current at that time; how learning was shaped by local conditions; and how learning, in turn, affected its location could inform and stimulate our modern view of learning cities. On the other hand, the analytical framework of the learning cities paradigm can help us to identify the local factors that conditioned education and scholarship in historical cities and to describe more accurately the

dynamic interplay of locale and learning. The contributions of this volume intend to exemplify the benefits of this perspective to research into centres of learning in the Graeco-Roman world.

The current debate on learning cities and regions suggests that research in this field, regardless of the historical period, requires a multidisciplinary approach. Just as a 'learning city' in our times is a multifaceted outcome of governing bodies, private organisations, research institutions, social groups and individuals entering a cooperative enterprise, so also ancient centres of learning took shape through an interplay of teachers, students, authorities, communities, economic factors and so forth. Investigation into a polis that bears the marks of *paideia* therefore encompasses a wide range of approaches, from political and social history to archaeology, from philosophy to literary studies. Apart from taking into account different types of evidence, research will benefit from cross-cultural comparison and historical perspective because this enables us to dig deeper into the specifics of each single place. Only then will we be able to pinpoint the decisive factors and drivers behind the rise and development of ancient centres of learning.

Consequently, individual case studies must precede generalisation. Of course, the scope of the present collection of articles does not allow an exhaustive treatment of the topic, but the chapters can illustrate the approach and map promising paths for further investigation. What we gain by taking a look at modern learning cities is a new model of explanation: a fresh perspective on the genesis and development of educational discourses and practices in antiquity – one alive to the dynamic nature of this process, instead of foregrounding, as recent scholarship still does, theoretical positions on education.¹⁴ This is not to say that the study of pedagogic theorisation and individual intellectuals does not yield important insights, but the approach suggested in this volume can add to this a dimension without which our picture of ancient learning remains incomplete. While considering relevant factors, actors and configurations, this model eschews a simple determinism that would suppose educational theory and practice to be totally conditioned by their local context. Rather, we may call the proposed method genealogical and integrative because it charts the dynamic character of learning and teaching embedded in a local context.

Learning cities in the Graeco-Roman world?

In order to briefly illustrate the interconnections between educational theory and practice, and the ancient polis it is worth looking at two examples that still dominate the modern imagination of Greek learning. The first is classical Athens, where we encounter the

emergence of pedagogic institutions that were to shape the face of formal education in antiquity and beyond. The school of the outstanding rhetorician and publicist Isocrates and the philosophical schools founded by Plato and his disciple Aristotle, the Academy and the Lyceum, respectively, from the first half of the fourth century came to inspire the intellectual life first of Athens herself, then of the entire Greek world and later of the Roman Empire.¹⁵ These institutions of elite education not only implanted the idea of what knowledge and skills a free man ought to master, and in what environment this instruction was to be practised most effectively, but also bequeathed to the following centuries the concept of the institutionalised and long-living academic community engaging in the quest for knowledge and truth. Though seemingly the solitary invention of geniuses, these schools did not spring into life in a vacuum. Far from that, Isocrates' school as well as the Academy and the Lyceum grew on the soil of a characteristically Athenian culture, an intellectual environment that had been cultivated for decades by the schools' forbears and had benefitted from its local conditions.

In effect, the development of Athenian democracy was both the precondition and the seedbed for rhetorical and philosophical teaching. Only where there were occasions and venues for the public exchange of opinions could speech flourish and attain a level of refinement that made formal teaching by experts advisable. And only where speculation on human life, virtues and truth was allowed, and appreciated, could the adventure of Western philosophy gain pace. This is not the place to elaborate in detail how the political, social, economic and cultural resources in fifth-century Athens made possible the advent of the schools. Suffice it to say that if it had not been for the debates in the Assembly, the law courts, the theatre of Dionysus and the attractiveness of a prospering metropolis, key figures in intellectual history, such as Socrates, Plato and Isocrates, would not have emerged or at least would not have been as influential as they were. Aristophanes' comedies and Plato's dialogues, stylised as they are, still allow us a glimpse into the place of Socrates' and the sophists' inquiries among the Athenian citizens. Teaching philosophy and rhetoric became part of the polis's life because the teachers addressed the specific needs of the urban society. Arguably the whole of Isocrates' teaching aimed at the formation of the successful citizen, who would be ideally placed to manage all public affairs.¹⁶

Learning, both by adolescents and adults, was evidently intertwined with, and generated by, situational factors which coalesced in this peculiar configuration only in classical Athens. With a metaphor borrowed from biology, we could say that Athens was a habitat or ecosystem excellently suited to facilitate the rise of the rhetorical and

philosophical schools.¹⁷ As the literary reflections in drama, oratory, historiography and philosophy document, this type of learning did not stay behind the walls of the schools. Quite the reverse: it stretched out far into various areas of civic life. It is, then, only logical that the historian Thucydides had the Athenian leader Pericles claim that *paideia*, learning, was the hallmark of his hometown, which was destined to teach the Greek world.¹⁸ And Isocrates, evidently with vested interest, extolled the Athenian mission to civilise the world through rhetorical-philosophical teaching.¹⁹

Pericles' bold claim proved to be even more justified than Thucydides could have imagined. For what had been achieved in Athens in education never lost its hold over the Graeco-Roman world, down to the end of antiquity. How powerful the legacy of Athenian thought was can still be felt in modern mystifications: for example in the famous expression 'the Greek miracle', coined in 1883 by the historian of religion Ernest Renan.²⁰ The concept of institutionalised learning spread to remote towns and regions across the Mediterranean, and the Athenian schools were emulated many times in other metropolises: for example in Alexandria, Rome, Antioch and Constantinople. These poleis all laid claim, though not officially, as modern learning cities do, to the status of civic communities where education was centre stage and defined urban identity. Although it is sometimes hard to determine precisely the interplay of city and learning, we still can trace in the ancient sources the awareness that a distinctive type of education was by nature the product of the polis and formed an integral part of urban life. Evidence for this is provided by, for example, Cicero (106–43 BCE), who deemed travel to Athens and attendance at the schools there to be essential for the perfection of his education.²¹ Centuries later, the young Synesius (c. 373–414 CE) from northern Africa was likewise in no doubt that an aspirational student could not forego soaking up the atmosphere of academic life in the Greek capital – if only to discover that his high hopes were utterly frustrated when he arrived.²² Such views, even in their disillusionment, support the claim that in antiquity higher education was closely associated with its local setting.

Our second example is the arguably most famous centre of scholarship in Greek antiquity: Hellenistic Alexandria.²³ It was there, in the capital of the Egyptian monarchy, that king Ptolemy I Soter (r. 323–283 BCE) founded the Mouseion, an academic institution of a new type that was destined to become an inspiration for scholars down to our own times.²⁴ This research institution was organised as a cult association around the worship of the nine Muses; its members were appointed and funded by the ruler. What was truly innovative in the Ptolemies' undertaking was the bold objective to collect and make

available the entire knowledge of the oecumene, the civilised world. Because of its antiquarian mission the Mouseion gained fame for a particular type of learning: a rather bookish kind of scholarship often associated with the adjective 'Alexandrian'. Well-known for painstaking research, thorough reading of classical texts and subtle textual criticism, the erudition practised in the Mouseion was very much embodied in the works of its philologists, Callimachus and Aristophanes of Byzantium. Although the Alexandrian research institution may seem to be eclipsed by these distinguished individuals we need to bear in mind that it encompassed far more members of lesser renown, that is, an entire scholarly community, and the world-famous library, which made possible multidisciplinary study across all fields recognised as worthy of serious pursuit.²⁵ Thus, the Mouseion, as an institutionalised form of scholarship and academic community, foreshadowed, in effect, the medieval and modern idea of a *universitas studiorum*.

It does not go too far to say that Alexandria's name, because of the Ptolemaic foundation, not only became synonymous with a distinctive kind of institutionalised learning but also inspired the modern vision of a city pervaded by learning. The unbroken fascination with the lost library of Alexandria even set off a revival when, in 2002, and with the support of UNESCO, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was established as a library with a conference centre and museums, in a move to recreate right in the middle of the city the very origin of academic life and activities. Returning to the Hellenistic original we need, however, to be aware of how little we know of the practicalities of the relationship between the Mouseion and the polis Alexandria. For one thing, modern archaeologists and historians can only speculate about the precise location of the buildings within the vast palace area, and nothing more is known about their dimensions, arrangement and appearance. Whether the infrastructure and economy of the scholarly community was a noticeable factor in the everyday life of the city is, therefore, hard to estimate. Further, from all that we know, it seems rather unlikely that the specialist scholarship pursued in the Mouseion had anything of what nowadays we would call outreach: any significant contribution to the Alexandrian people's lives and doings. Rather, it came to life because of the king's thirst for prestige and remained within the realm of the court. Yet it is safe to say that academic learning and life in Hellenistic Alexandria owed their origin and prosperity not least to the local conditions, the presence of the king's court, the rise and growth of the capital, and the city's economic power. On the other hand, academic learning, whether philological, philosophical or medical, never left Alexandria until the end of antiquity so that in the long run the city must have exhibited

Late antiquity

Much more could be said on this bond between town and gown, which, in the wake of Graeco-Roman civilisation, proliferated throughout the Mediterranean. Major and minor centres of learning emerged in the provinces of the Roman Empire. Teachers and students travelled far and wide to join renowned school communities, and in so doing, they often formed intellectual networks that would open the door to a career. The spread of schools, most notably of rhetorical schools, reached a peak in the period of late antiquity, when seats of learning competed in a veritable education market. Athens still in the fourth and fifth centuries CE boasted its philosophical and rhetorical schools, but its pre-eminence came to be challenged by Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. For the Latin West, the picture does not differ much in Rome and, among other cities, Carthage, where Augustine taught eloquence, and Bordeaux, where Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola were members of the academic community. As regards the local factor, it is important to note that some schools developed a characteristic profile, partly depending on influential individuals and their expertise. Alexandria, for instance, became a hotspot of Neoplatonic philosophy, after having excelled also in Jewish scholarship, biblical exegesis and medicine.²⁷ And in Lebanon, the school of Berytus (modern Beirut) attracted many a young man who wanted to study law.²⁸ This fact, as well as what we know about the schools' interaction with urban society in Alexandria, Antioch and elsewhere in the Empire, highlights that learning and city entertained a multilayered relationship.

To explore the aspects of this intersection between learning and its locus we possess a wealth of evidence, both textual and material, from the late Empire. Particular prominence is often given to literary accounts of academic life in the cities which stem from the pens of respected scholars themselves. Libanius of Antioch, Himerius, Eunapius of Sardes, Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine, to mention just the outstanding authors of the fourth century, depict their study period and teaching activity so vividly that modern research has often taken their narratives as direct reflections of reality.²⁹ Of course, their texts are literary recreations and inventions of how teachers, students and citizens interacted, but still they provide valuable insight into the late antique perception of the local dimension of learning. No less important are inscriptions and imperial legislation on schooling and its practicalities. The image derived from literary texts and documentary evidence is greatly enriched by material remains. In recent years our knowledge of the physical setting of teaching has

been enormously advanced by the excavations in Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. On this site in the city centre a large and well-preserved academic complex from the fifth and sixth centuries has been uncovered so that we now possess more detailed information on the arrangement, dimensions and shapes of classrooms within the urban grid. The archaeological remains there document continuous schooling activity well into the seventh century.³⁰

Taken together, these pieces of evidence can, at least for select cases like Alexandria, shed fresh light on the effects which the schools and their civic environment had on each other.³¹ In well-documented places, such as Carthage, Antioch and Alexandria, we are able to examine a variety of factors relevant to this mutual relationship, from the status of the city within the Empire to the encroachment of magistrates, from the students' role in public unrest to the impact of Christianisation on academic life. Occasionally, we also hear critical voices which call into question the intricate connection of education and the polis. Athanasius' hugely influential *Life of Antony*, written around 360 CE, turns the entrenched notion of civic *paideia* on its head with the ascetic's withdrawal into the uncivilised desert, an alternative 'city' where Antony attains a far higher plane of wisdom. Roughly at the same time, the philosopher Themistius (c. 317–390 CE) dismisses the local setting as immaterial to intellectual brilliance and asks his students to give thought not to where they should study but to the men who would teach them.³² These critics, by way of negation, testify to the view widespread in antiquity that the locale made a difference to learning.

On account of the variegated picture outlined by late antique evidence of higher learning the complex interplay of education with its urban environment emerges as a fertile field for research. Once we have become aware of the relevance of the external conditions we can investigate the symbiotic relationship in its various aspects, with a focus on the interfaces between the school and the city, be they personal, institutional, political, social, economic or religious. What we gain by paying attention to the interdependence of agents and factors is a deeper understanding of, on the one hand, the situational nature of teaching and learning, including pedagogic thinking, and, on the other hand, the schools' impact outside their walls, on their locations.

Gaza as a case study

What makes late antique Gaza, which is the centre of this volume, a suitable object to study? A brief look at the city's history and the available sources from that period can explain the reason for choosing this place.³³ The well-known mosaic map in the sixth-century church

of St George in Madaba in Jordan and the mosaic in the church of Umm er-Rasas show Gaza as a typical Hellenised settlement, with the buildings that commonly defined the built cityscape of ancient poleis.³⁴ Veritable city vignettes, these artistic depictions give the impression that Gaza, equipped with its walls, stoas, theatre and churches, enjoyed considerable prosperity in this period and was clearly the most important town in this region of the coastal plain of Palestine. Situated in a fertile area and on the highway between Egypt and Syria, Gaza had a significant role to play in trade already under the Ptolemaic kings.³⁵ One of the main factors of its economic power was certainly its harbour, which was also important for the trade in wine that is frequently mentioned in late antique texts.³⁶ The relationship between Gaza and its harbour Maiumas became riddled with tensions over the course of the city's Christianisation, which came relatively late.³⁷ While the port city had already adopted Christianity under Constantine, Gaza itself remained a place of thriving pagan worship until around 400 CE, when Bishop Porphyry embarked on a campaign to destroy the pagan temples by force and build several churches instead. Although the historical facts of the forcible conversion, and in particular the role of the emperor in it, are hard to establish because of the bias of our main source, it is clear that by the end of the fifth century Gaza had been firmly Christianised.³⁸ The region also secured a place in the history of Christianity because a number of monasteries were founded in the vicinity of Gaza.³⁹ St Hilarion, the founder of Palestinian monasticism, was born around 291/292 in Tawatha, south of Gaza, and settled in the desert east of Maiumas.⁴⁰ However, we know from textual and material evidence that in the sixth century there were still pagans and Jews in Gaza and the surrounding villages, and they continued to practise their religions.⁴¹ Overall, the available sources draw a vivid picture of civic life in Gaza, including a municipal government, a local bishop, celebration of civic festivals, building of churches and a flourishing economy, before the Islamic conquest in the 630s heralded the end of Hellenic culture in Palestine.⁴² Our knowledge, though, is limited by the fact that Gaza has never been excavated systematically, so, as regards the built cityscape and artefacts, we have to rely on the scattered, if substantial, discoveries and extrapolation from archaeological surveys elsewhere in the region.⁴³

One feature stands out from this picture and has attracted much interest for a considerable time now. While in previous centuries Gaza's contribution to Graeco-Roman culture seems to have been relatively insignificant, the city rose to fame as an intellectual centre only in late antiquity and mainly in the first half of the sixth century.⁴⁴ Much has been written on the so-called 'school of Gaza',

and this label, introduced into scholarship in 1892 by Kilian Seitz, has given rise to some misconceptions.⁴⁵ What we can say about formal education in Gaza is that between the end of the fifth and the middle of the sixth century a number of rhetoricians, philosophers and poets were active in the city, and had a high standing in the life of the urban community.⁴⁶ Aeneas, already mentioned, Procopius and his successor Choricus taught rhetoric there, and the latter two were evidently running an educational institution that attracted students from the region and elsewhere.⁴⁷ Their works, in particular their letters and public orations, document that the activities in the school were oriented towards the civic environment, not only in being addressed to local audiences but also by contributing to public gatherings and discussing matters of public interest. This association is particularly well documented in the eulogies of Procopius and Choricus on local notables and the bishop, and in festive speeches celebrating the bishop's building activities and the citizens' cultivated amusements. The sophists' works thus give us a fascinating glimpse into the centrality in the public sphere of all that was related to traditional *paideia* – or rather they aim to disseminate this ideal among the population of Gaza and visitors from other towns. More precisely, the rhetorical texts convey the image that the scholars were eminently public figures who engaged in civic affairs, acted as patrons, took care of people in need and closely cooperated with the bishop, who is said to have received the same classical upbringing and taken a keen interest in the school.⁴⁸ In addition, epistles and speeches are often speaking *pro domo* when they underline the vital function of literary *paideia* to maintain public order, harmony among the citizens and even everyone's mental health. One hardly needs to add that this was how the men of letters themselves wanted to see Gaza's urban character, rather than actual reality.

Training in Greek rhetoric and literature was not the exclusive area in which erudition came to the fore. Rather, learning virtually permeated the entire city. Alongside the practice of rhetorical declamation, scholars and literati in Gaza were active in philosophical speculation, as we have seen in Aeneas' *Theophrastus*, and poetry, which seems to have occupied a firm place in public festivities.⁴⁹ Further, visual culture, for example, mosaics and paintings, exuded an air of refined mythological and literary taste that kept the classics alive.⁵⁰ All this suggests that classical *paideia* enjoyed high visibility in Gaza's public life and was appreciated by many as an integral part of urban living. We should, however, be cautious not to define learning too narrowly in terms of the inherited elite culture. Religious scholarship and formation did play a central role as well and a significant one at that. Not only did the prolific sophist Choricus

apply his rhetorical skill in the service of the Church to explain the images in a church building and extol clerical virtue, but his teacher Procopius also united the explanation of Homer with state-of-the-art exegesis of the divine scriptures. Already Aeneas in the *Theophrastus* had harnessed Platonic philosophy for a triumphant demonstration of Christian superiority over pagan error. Such formal knowledge and skills, though, were but one side of what can be termed religious instruction. No less important was that in the vicinity of Gaza the ascetics Barsanuphius and John advised a wide spectrum of people through letters, both clerics and laymen, scholars and traders, on how to lead a life pleasing to God.⁵¹ The two hermits in their cells confidently assumed teaching authority and were explicit that Christian, or rather ascetic, conduct should be given priority over secular education.⁵² Their pedagogic impetus was carried on and further developed by their disciple Dorotheus, who in his own cenobium gave to his fellow monastics lectures on ethics that bear close resemblance to what Greek philosophers had expounded before.⁵³ Occasions for teaching and learning appear to have been easily available in various settings in Gaza.

The cases of the ascetics are also interesting for another reason. In their writings we can see that the question of Christian and classical education, or that of sacred and secular, had not been settled yet. A stable interpretation of these notions was still far ahead when the monks dismissed formal schooling as contrary to humility or decried theatre shows as lewd performances perilous to a Christian soul.⁵⁴ Such tensions were apparently related to the dichotomy of town and ascetic community, and of monks and laypeople, but clashes between the two universes of values were far from being confined to the monastic context. Returning to the city of Gaza itself we find Choricus repeatedly taking up religiously motivated misgivings about secular scholarship and mythology, only to make the case for a *paideia* compatible with Christian faith.⁵⁵ And his *Apology for the Mimes* was a sophisticated defence of the infamous mimic performances against religious objections, even without frankly saying so.⁵⁶

It is easy to see why scholars who study the educational discourse in Gaza have been tempted to speculate about a distinctive local culture or mentality which brought forth these opposing responses to the issue of classical culture within a Christianised polis.⁵⁷ We can hardly fail to notice that the sophists' and the monks' ways of dealing with traditional learning, but also the attitudes of the bishop and local people, were informed by the specific configurations of agents, material and immaterial factors in Gaza and its surroundings. Of course, a number of features were shared with other late antique cities – Gaza had not suddenly sprung from nowhere – but still the way in

which intellectuals, students, magistrates, clerics, ascetics and ordinary people dealt with one another and negotiated the place of learning suggests that educational thinking and practice had very much to do with the civic context. It is open to debate whether Gaza, as has been argued, was characterised by a cultural harmony or permeability of symbolic universes that helped to alleviate emerging rifts. What does become evident, however, is that we cannot fully understand why learning became such a central concern in sixth-century Gaza and what forms it took if we fail to bring it into dialogue with its locale. Most of the contributions to this volume are intended to flesh this claim out, while two chapters discuss examples from the Latin West in order to illuminate the variety of ways in which late antique education intersected with its local setting.

Summary of the chapters

The volume opens with an introductory chapter by Michael Osborne, Muir Houston and Catherine Lido, who discuss current approaches to learning cities and the use of big data in analysing communities that are characterised by various forms of learning. They start with an account of how the concepts of learning cities and lifelong learning emerged, and have made their advance into international and global initiatives and policies. After this they discuss historical examples of seats of learning and compare these to modern learning cities in order to highlight the role that large collections of data play in understanding the modern examples. One important finding of this comparison is that learning in ancient cities covered a much broader spectrum of aspects central to the functioning of civil society than merely being the realm of scholars, students and libraries. Finally the authors discuss the current dominant themes in the learning cities and regions paradigm, such as innovation and social cohesion. Overall, this chapter provides a modern perspective on the local dimension of learning and teaching as an inspiration for research on historical cities.

With Martin Hose's chapter we then move to Greek antiquity. His contribution takes as its starting point the dramatic surge in literary production in late antique Gaza and examines the question of how the city managed to become a top address for rhetorical schooling in this period. To answer this question, Hose explores the wider context by discussing the extent to which literary activity in ancient Greece was driven and shaped by the framework of the polis. Introducing the metaphorical notion of the ecosystem, he analyses the examples of classical Sparta and Athens, and examines the Hellenistic gymnasium as a venue for education, to identify the main settings for literary pursuits. The chapter then proceeds to the changing conditions in late

antiquity and focusses on Gaza. It argues that rhetorical studies managed to maintain their central role in the city by successfully inhabiting, or rather usurping, Christian discourses and settings.

As the previous chapter has illustrated the benefits of a contrastive comparison, Therese Fuhrer focusses on late antique Carthage and Rome, as seen by St Augustine. She studies two sermons delivered in Carthage by Bishop Augustine against the backdrop of the capital in order to demonstrate that the preacher tries to mould his congregation's identity and frame of mind through an engagement with both local pagan traditions and the Christian capital, Rome. First Fuhrer shows how *Confessions* 3–5 present Carthage as a space for philosophical, literary and theological discourses, within which the young Augustine moves. In the two sermons (*sermones* 62 and 24) which are then analysed Augustine puts stress on local identity and specific cultural conditions, while Carthage's materiality seems unimportant. Fuhrer argues that the dialectic between local specificity and the inessentiality of the material to religion reflects Augustine's attitude toward dealing with diverse religious traditions. On a general plane, this chapter illuminates the important role of rhetoric in the construction of the peculiar 'character' of a city, in particular in times when cultural identity was a controversial and contested issue.

Christa Gray highlights gender and age aspects in late antique education, drawing attention to female figures and children. She analyses the letter sent by Jerome to the noblewoman Laeta shortly after 400 CE, which offers advice on the upbringing of her daughter Paula as a virgin devoted to God (*Ep.* 107). Gray's discussion shows that Jerome, in this epistle, which has been labelled a 'pedagogic manual', combines the model of classical education, as exemplified by Quintilian's instructions, with Christian asceticism in order to promote his vision of the best way to form members of the Roman social elite. This chapter argues that with this blend of traditions Jerome addresses important concerns of the time and attributes great significance to the spatial environment as he advocates removing the girl Paula from the degenerate city of Rome to the rural margins of the Empire. In Gray's reading Jerome's letter emerges as an excellent example of the complex and dynamic relationship between education, religion, social class and individual agents within a specific local setting.

Ine Jacobs turns to material evidence to estimate the continuity of classical culture in the cities of the Roman East in late antiquity, between the fourth and the seventh centuries CE. To highlight the importance of archaeological finds for an accurate understanding of civic culture, she focusses on theatre buildings and statuary from cities in the province *Palaestina Prima*, to which Gaza belonged. Theatre spectacles are especially suited for this analysis because we possess a

wealth of material evidence, and the topic was a litmus test for the survival in Christian society of what in modern times is often called the secular. Jacobs's survey of remains from theatres and statues shows very clearly that archaeology can reveal cultural practices that have left no traces in the literary record. Using a chronological examination of theatres and statues down to the end of antiquity Jacobs is able to establish a picture of classical culture that bears the signs of a transition period, oscillating between manifest decline and reuse of existing structures and artworks. She argues that the diverse image of classical culture in the cities reflects a process of thorough transformation in which Christianity, though undoubtedly central, was not the only decisive factor. Her conclusion is that during the sixth century the city in the East as a whole was changing, and civic life was becoming more pragmatic, so interest in non-essential adornments and building activity was lost.

Fotini Hadjittofi's chapter deals with the literary production of Gaza, studying Choricus' depiction of the relationship between city and school. Both his school speeches and his public orations show that Choricus constructs his hometown not as a physical place but primarily as a privileged seat of learning. The main characteristic of this literary or mental model of Gaza is that it is an ideal environment in which town and gown live harmoniously together in a mutually beneficial relationship. Gaza appears first and foremost as a city in which people from almost every walk of life actively take part in rhetorical culture, and so, because of the peaceful exchange of opinions, public order is never at risk. It is important that this idealised image of Gaza not only serves to claim an important place for rhetorical studies in the polis but also presents Choricus the teacher himself as the one whose main task is to foster harmony among the citizens and advance the city's well-being. Hadjittofi's reading of Choricus' works reminds us once again that the interplay of learning and its locus, alongside its conspicuously concrete aspects, is to no small extent a matter of perception and discursive construction.

In David Westberg's contribution we focus on the rhetorical representation of sophists and their teaching in Gaza in the first half of the sixth century CE. In order to put the image of the sophist into context, this chapter first reviews the evidence for rhetorical schooling and scholarly activity in Gaza from the fifth to the sixth century and sheds light on the connection between education in Gaza and that in other centres of learning in the Greek East. What emerges from this historical outline is that the Gazan literary culture seems to have become more independent from schooling in Alexandria, to which some of the Gazan intellectuals had close links. Westberg then

analyses the image of the teacher Procopius of Gaza in the funeral eulogy composed by his student and successor Choricus. The epideictic oration shows an idealised image of the sophist, who perfectly encapsulates the qualities required for training the sons of the elite families. Particular prominence is given to the sophist's performances, that is, his public role within the polis. However, as the chapter demonstrates, it was precisely the rhetor's appearance in public that also provoked critical remarks, which are reflected in the sophists' writings. Praise and caricature in the literary representations of the sophist point not only to an ambivalent public image but also to the sophists' self-reflexivity.

Claudia Tiersch discusses one of the key themes in Procopius' collection of letters. In his epistles, many of which are addressed to colleagues and other learned men, Procopius often seizes the opportunity to outline the relationship, or hierarchy, between his own profession, rhetorical studies, and the study of law. Tiersch, exploring this topic in letters sent to Procopius' brothers in Constantinople, shows that the relationship is presented as a strained one – a quality that is also related to the local settings in Gaza and Constantinople, respectively. It is further important that the relationship between rhetoric and law is intimately connected with the sophist's presentation of his self and of classical culture. This chapter argues that Procopius promotes a vision of classical *paideia* that encompasses a wide range of cultural values, ethical norms and types of knowledge: in effect a way of life that is able to address the needs of the time. Remarkably, the expertise of the well-educated man manages to bridge the divide between the spheres of rhetoric and law. Thus, Procopius' letters are an effective tool for the sophist to claim a central role for his own discipline within the academic arena of late antiquity.

Michael Champion undertakes an instructive comparison of two very different local settings of educational activities; the rhetorical school of Gaza and the monasteries surrounding the city. The first part examines the writings of Aeneas, Zacharias, Procopius and Choricus, and shows that the sophists advocate the traditional school as an education for life, which is embedded in the civic community and contributes to the city's prosperity. However, to attribute vital social functions to the classical tradition, the authors had to adapt, and sometimes misuse, *paideia* and its modes of expression to fit the Christian framework in sophisticated ways. In the second part of his chapter, Champion focusses on Dorotheus of Gaza's ascetic instructions, showing that monastic education aimed to habituate the monks to humility, the master virtue in Dorotheus' ascetic vision. Addressing the question of what made this kind of education

distinctive, he argues that, according to Dorotheus, tradition served vital functions in education, which was conceptualised as lifelong formation of character. Champion's comparative approach demonstrates very clearly that local cultural conditions greatly shaped educational thinking and practice in both the school and the cenobium.

Finally, Jan Stenger analyses how cultural leadership manifested itself in the complex negotiations of competing belief systems in late antique Gaza. For this purpose he compares two models of pedagogic authority: one presented in Aeneas' philosophical dialogue *Theophrastus*, the other emerging from the letters of the monks Barsanuphius and John. Aeneas' dialogue, emphasising the local roots of teaching, stages a dramatic performance of teaching authority which is based on a critical engagement with the classical tradition. The dialogue partners' close scrutiny of Greek philosophical thinking, however, results not in total rejection but in adaption to Christian faith. By way of contrast, the monks' letters flatly dismiss formal education and bear the marks of a determinedly anti-intellectual stance as they consider the social implications of classical *paideia* detrimental to a life of ascetic virtue. While Aeneas' model of cultural leadership aims at fruitful dialogue and consensus, Barsanuphius and John's vision of knowledge and teaching is profoundly hierarchical, as is also visible in the communication mode of their letters. Stenger argues that the two complementary models of cultural leadership are suggestive of the specific local conditions of Gaza, where the compatibility of competing cultural systems had still not been settled completely.

Notes

- 1 Marinus, *Procl.* 10. See Stenger (forthcoming) on this episode.
- 2 Marinus, *Procl.* 15.
- 3 Marinus, *Procl.* 32: 'Πρόκλος ὁ κόσμος τῆς πολιτείας'.
- 4 Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophr.* 3.4–4.13. The translation is adapted from Gertz *et al.* (2012).
- 5 In *Ep.* 18, Aeneas makes the same point: that Athenian scholarship has now relocated, so it is no longer necessary for upper-class fathers to send their sons there. In contrast to the *Theophrastus*, in this case Gaza is where students can perfect their Attic style of rhetoric. Interestingly, in the letter Aeneas considers Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum to be almost synonymous with Athenian culture.
- 6 Kaster (1988, 21).
- 7 For example, Longworth (2006), Longworth and Osborne (2010), further OECD (2001).
- 8 See the website of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, UNESCO (2016).
- 9 Documentation, including a membership application form, is provided on the

- Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) website.
- 10 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2014, 27–36). See also [Chapter 2](#) in this volume.
 - 11 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg. Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission, running from 2007 to 2013, continued under the new Erasmus+ Programme.
 - 12 Smeyers and Depaepe (2008).
 - 13 See Rüegg (1992–2011) and Veltjens-Rösch (2011).
 - 14 The focus on systematic theories of education in the Graeco-Roman world is still strong in Bloomer (2015).
 - 15 The literature on education in Athens is vast. See, for example, the contributions in Too (2001).
 - 16 Muir (2015).
 - 17 For the idea of the ecosystem see Martin Hose's contribution in this volume.
 - 18 Thucydides 2.41.1.
 - 19 Isocrates, *Panegyricus* (Or. 4) 38–50, *Antidosis* (Or. 15) 293–296.
 - 20 Renan (1883, 60).
 - 21 Cicero, *fin.* 5.1–5.6. Cicero studied at the Academy between 79 and 77 BCE, and attended lectures in Epicurean philosophy.
 - 22 Synesius, *Ep.* 54, 136. See Stenger (forthcoming) on students' enthusiasm for, and disappointment with, Athenian learning in late antiquity.
 - 23 See Hose (2009) for a short introduction to Hellenistic Alexandria as a centre of learning; further Stephens (2010).
 - 24 Hadas-Lebel (2012, 11–16).
 - 25 For the Alexandrian library see the contributions in MacLeod (2004).
 - 26 See note 27 for literature on Jewish-Christian scholarship in Alexandria and Watts (2006) on Alexandrian school life in late antiquity.
 - 27 Hadas-Lebel (2012) gives an account of Philo's activities in Alexandria. Further, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, is closely associated with the city of Alexandria. See also Sandnes (2009) on Philo's, Clement's and Origen's approaches to encyclopaedic studies, and on the Christian school in Alexandria.
 - 28 Hall (2004).
 - 29 For example, Watts (2006) and Cribiore (2007).
 - 30 Derda, Markiewicz and Wipszycka (2007).
 - 31 See Watts (2006) on the schools' role in the social and religious life of late antique Alexandria.
 - 32 Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 14.7 (the ascetic desert as a city of monks), 72–80 (Antony's discussion with the Greek philosophers). Themistius, *Or.* 27. See also Stenger (2016) on the association of philosophy and wisdom with the city-countryside dichotomy in the works of John Chrysostom.
 - 33 See Downey (1963), Glucker (1987), Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2004), Haldimann *et al.* (2007), Sivan (2008, 328–347) and Isaac (2014). Saliou (2007) provides an overview of the literary sources and a chronological table of Gaza's history in late antiquity.
 - 34 Piccirillo (1993) and Piccirillo and Alliata (1999).
 - 35 Di Segni (2004) gives an account of Gaza's territory. See also Saliou (2007, 144, 148) and Isaac (2014, 409).
 - 36 Isaac (2014, 420–422).
 - 37 Trombley (1993/1994) and Hahn (2004).
 - 38 The events are described in Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*.

- 39 Hevelone-Harper (2005) and Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006). On the archaeological evidence see Hirschfeld (2004) and Elter and Hassoune (2005).
- 40 Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* 2.7. Jerome, in his *Life of Hilarion* (14), claims that it was Hilarion who introduced monasticism to Palestine. Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 8–15).
- 41 Pagans in the Gaza region are attested in, for example, Barsanuphius and John, *Ep.* 775, 777. For the synagogue of Gaza see now Werlin (2015, 237–263). Further, see Bauzou (2007, 127–136) on the religious composition and cults of Gaza's population up to the Christianisation enforced by Bishop Porphyry in 403.
- 42 Saliou (2005, 2007). For an overview of Gaza's history in the Islamic period see Sadeq (2007).
- 43 See Jacobs in this volume.
- 44 See, for example, Renaut (2007) and Champion (2014).
- 45 Seitz (1892). The older view of the 'school' of Gaza can be found especially in Downey (1958, 1963).
- 46 See Geiger (2014) for information on scholars in late antique Palestine. Further, Isaac (2014, 425–427).
- 47 Choricus' school texts in English translation, together with a useful introduction, can be found in Penella (2009).
- 48 See Stenger (2017b).
- 49 On John of Gaza's anacreontics and poetic description of the cosmos see Ciccolella (2000) and Lauritzen (2015).
- 50 Piccirillo (2007).
- 51 Hevelone-Harper (2005) and Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006).
- 52 The common but problematic notion of the 'school of Gaza' has even determined the conceptualisation of Gazan monasticism, which has been described as a 'monastic school'. Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006), and, arguing for a reassessment, Stenger (2017c).
- 53 Stenger (2017c).
- 54 Barsanuphius and John, *Ep.* 722, 809, 836–837. Dorotheus, *Did.* 2.35.
- 55 Choricus, *Or.* 2.42, 8.21–8.22, 48, 13.7, 16.2–16.3. See Stenger (2017a).
- 56 Webb (2006), with perhaps too much emphasis on the religious aspects. See Weiss (2014) for a study of public spectacles in late antique Gaza and Palestine.
- 57 Ter Haar Romeny (2007, 175–176), Sivan (2008, 346–347) and Champion (2014). See Stenger (2010) for a critical review of the prevailing opinion.

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The role of big data in elucidating learning cities ancient, present and future

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Educational history, like many other areas of human activity, has a habit of moving in cycles and the idea of whole communities learning for and throughout life follows this pattern.

(Longworth and Osborne 2010, 369)

Introduction to ‘Learning Cities’

Although the concept of the *learning society* in recent times can be traced back nearly five decades to Hutchins (1970), it is an educational philosophy which has permeated the ethos of cities and regions through many eras of history. For Hutchins, the need for a learning society was founded upon a belief that formal education could no longer respond to the increasing demands upon it, particularly in times of rapid change, and when formal educational opportunities may be the privilege of the few. He called for continuous and inclusive education, drawing on ancient Athens as an inspiration when he argues:

education was not a segregated activity, conducted for certain hours, in certain places, at a certain time of life. It was the aim of the society. The city educated the man. The Athenian was educated by culture, by *paideia*.

(Hutchins 1970, 133)

Hutchins’s suggestion that education is in and of itself *the* aim of society may be contested, as societies have multiple priorities and goals, crossing economic and social domains. Perhaps a better expression of the idea is that whatever the goals of a society – in a specific era – there is a need for a bedrock of learning for the society to flourish. The important distinction here is between learning and education, the former referring to an expansive, active and self-directed activity that is not institutionally bound. There is perhaps no

better illustration of this than in the recent United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; UN 2015). Not only do SDGs focus on a broader conception of learning in Goal 4 ‘to ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all’, but there is a widespread view that all global challenges are underpinned by a lifelong learning dimension.

Perhaps the first notable modern reference to the learning society is from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which draws on the influential Faure Report of 1972, *Learning to Be*.

If learning involves all of one’s life, in the sense of both time-span and diversity, and all of society, including its social and economic as well as its educational resources, then we must go even further than the necessary overhaul of ‘educational systems’ until we reach the stage of a learning society.

(Faure *et al.* 1972, xxxiii)

This highly influential report appealed to all countries within UNESCO to reorganise their education systems, such that all agencies (not simply the formal sector, mandated to offer provision) become providers of education, to ensure that all citizens are involved in learning, whatever their motivation or outcome. The concepts being promoted were those of *lifelong and lifewide learning*; the former refers to continuous learning through life and the latter to the ubiquity of the potential location of learning, beyond formal educational structures. It is striking that within this report, the importance of place within such an ambition was highlighted, and as was the case with Hutchins, a classical reference point was drawn upon.

All sectors – public administration, industry, communications, transport – must take part in promoting education. Local and national communities are in themselves eminently educative institutions. As Plutarch said, “the City is the best teacher”. And especially when the city is capable of remaining within human proportions, it does indeed contain immense educational potential – with its social and administrative structures and its cultural networks – not only because of the vitality of the exchanges that go on, but also because it constitutes a school for civic sentiment and fellow-feeling.

(Faure *et al.* 1972, 162)

A further report to UNESCO from the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century – *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Delors *et al.* 1996) – expanded the link between the concept of

lifelong learning and that of a learning society, within a modern urban context:

The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives access to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It links up with another concept often put forward, that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity of learning and fulfilling one's potential.

(Delors *et al.* 1996, 38)

Jordan, Longworth and Osborne (2014), Osborne, Kearns and Yang (2013), and Longworth and Osborne (2010), among others, have traced parallel and subsequent developments in this territory of place or geographically based learning concepts. These concepts have been posited not only by UNESCO but by other intergovernmental organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission (EC) as well as national government departments in various parts of the world. The step from positing the creation of a learning society, supported by lifelong and lifewide learning, to the creation of the learning region or city has been a relatively short one, with the concept of the *educating city* as an intermediary. The work of the OECD in the 1970s led to use of the term *educating cities* and supported a project in seven cities in its member states: Adelaide, Edmonton, Edinburgh, Gothenburg, Kakegawa, Pittsburgh and Vienna (OECD 2000). A later OECD conference in 1992 in Gothenburg led to the creation of the International Association of Educating Cities (IAECs), based in Barcelona. One of the aspirations of this conference was to 'promote a learning city in which communities attempt to learn collectively as a means of changing their own futures' (OECD 1993, 10). The OECD's report, *Lifelong Learning for All* (OECD 1996), subsequently stressed the economic outcomes of lifelong learning and supported further work via a project concerned with learning regions at five European sites: Andalusia, Øresund, Jena, Thames Gateway and Vienna (OECD 2000).

Jordan, Longworth and Osborne (2014) argue that it was the Lisbon and Feira European Councils that triggered a focus within the EC, stressing the importance of policies centred on lifelong learning. The Lisbon Council set a strategic goal over the decade from 2000 to 2010 for the EU 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' (European Parliament 2000, 5). Geographic alignment was also put into place

through place-based and, specifically, regionally based lifelong learning because of disparities between regions in the EU. In short, the argument in Europe was that strategies for lifelong learning should match the diverse needs of each region. Such strategies are found in the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (European Commission 2000), which led to an EU-wide consultation updating the implementation of lifelong learning policies. The EC's communication, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (European Commission 2001), brought developments together in one communal, overarching aim of a 'knowledge-based society'.

Biao (2013) argues that the 'the learning city concept ... is an international initiative devoted to the promotion of sustainable, healthy, green and economically viable cities by the means of lifelong learning'. Globally, there have been also a number of initiatives within individual cities or regions; for example, in Canada (Faris 2005), across Africa (Walters 2009; Biao, Esaete and Oonyu 2013) and Australia (Kearns 2011). However, the most comprehensive developments in the last decade have been in Asia, most particularly in the Republic of Korea, China and Japan (Han and Makino 2013; Lee 2013; Osborne and Borkowska 2017). Many examples now exist of concrete, often government-driven initiatives in these countries. In Korea, learning city development is a direct consequence of legal frameworks that underpin policy, specifically, the Lifelong Education Law and the ordinances of cities. Lee (2013) provides a detailed case from Seoul, one of many designated learning cities in the country. In China the learning city concept is linked strongly with a focus on community education; many illustrations of such developments are available (see, for example, Ju 2011; Li 2011; Yuan 2012). As Han and Makino (2013) report, most Chinese cities have participated in one form of learning city development or another. They also provide specific examples from Japan in Iida City and Toyota City, and as is the case in China, they demonstrate how the learning city is linked to processes of community-building.

Recent work of UNESCO (2013a, 2013b and 2013c), within its Global Learning Cities initiative, sets out key features of learning cities and possible bases for evaluative metrics as shown in [Figure 2.1](#).

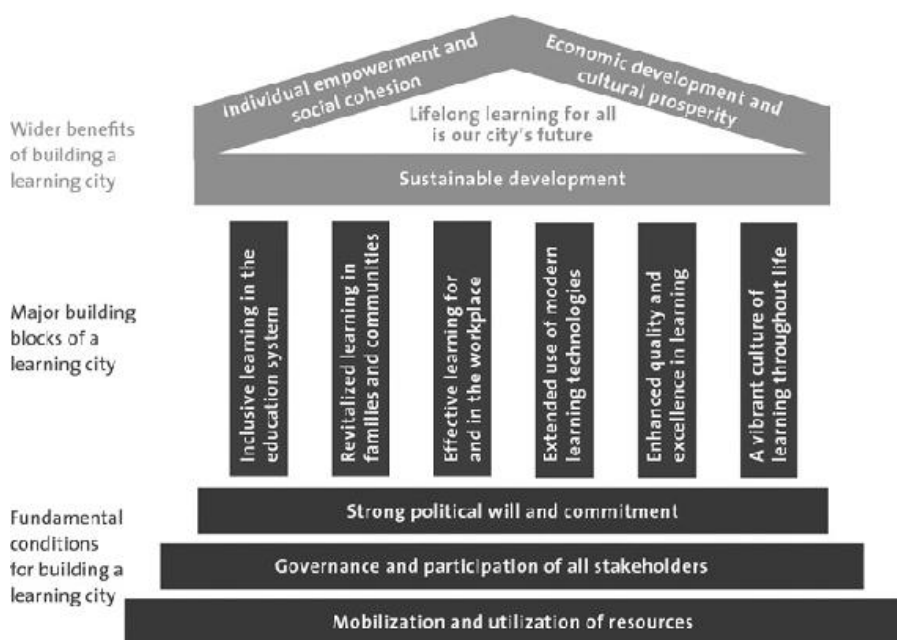


Figure 2.1 The framework of the key features of learning cities (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL, <http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/learning-cities/en-unesco-global-network-of-learning-cities-guiding-documents.pdf>).

Overall UNESCO presents 42 learning city indicators, which can be classified into three domains using the visual analogy of the learning ‘temple’ architecture: (1) ‘Pediment’, focussing on the wider benefits of building a modern learning city in terms of social and economic outcomes; (2) ‘Columns’, reflecting the learning aspects, or building blocks, of a learning city; and (3) ‘Foundational Steps’, outlining the conditions necessary for a learning city to thrive, including political will and leadership. The ‘Pediment’ includes individual empowerment and social cohesion (e.g. community engagement and social mobility), economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development (e.g. living conditions, transportation). The ‘Columns’ consist of inclusive learning in lifewide education, including learning in families and communities, ‘indigenous learning’ and government policies of support. This can be defined as reflecting a ‘vibrant culture of learning throughout life’. Finally, the ‘Foundational Steps’ are comprised of strong political will and commitment of the people (e.g. through cultural and civic engagement), leadership, governance and participation of all stakeholders (e.g. voting, volunteering), and mobilisation and utilisation of resources (e.g. expenditure on education and public programmes).

As with the concept of lifelong learning, little work has been undertaken to operationalise these features (Mwaikokesya, Osborne and Houston 2014) and evaluate the success of cities past, present or future. The use of Big Data, however, provides a promising approach to explore such features in exemplars of learning cities (globally and historically) and will be explored in detail in this chapter, highlighting the current work of the University of Glasgow's Urban Big Data Centre (UBDC), as well as the use of emerging technologies to explore ancient and modern urban centres. Such centres and global initiatives promoting novel approaches to exploring and understanding cities through their data help us to understand the success (and decline) of cities, particularly as technological advances lead to public (citizen) demands for transparency and self-efficacy in actualising the city-spaces which surround them.

Learning cities – past exemplars

The history of education in antiquity is not without relevance to our modern culture, for in it we can trace the direct ancestry of our own educational tradition.

(Marrou 1956, 11)

The notion of the learning society (and the related ideas of the learning city/region) is not a new concept; Longworth and Osborne (2010) outline this in what they have described as the *Age of Antiquity*. They suggest that the notion of learning is intimately linked to place and that this relationship can be traced at least as far back as 2,500 years ago to Ancient Greece and the writings of Plato. A more extensive discussion of the origins of the link between city-state and education in antique Athens and Alexandria is provided by Watts (2006). This begins with Roman approaches in the empire, moving on to Athenian approaches in the second and fourth centuries CE, up to Alexandrian shifts from the fourth into the fifth centuries CE and ending with the 'coming revolution' of Christian approaches and its inherent hierarchy. Watts argues that Athens in the fourth century CE hosted cultural resources 'unmatched' in the rest of the Mediterranean, and education formed a lucrative draw to a city, which financially was overall in decline.

From the early to the late fourth century CE Alexandria experienced a turbulent shift from pagan to Christian influence, contending with diverse factions of Platonic thought as well. However, it followed on closely from Athens as a revered centre of learning and boasted the *Museum* (founded in the reign of Ptolemy I Soter, fourth century BCE), which included the great library (Marrou 1956). Marrou claims that not only was it a centre for poetry, literature and schools of

philosophical learning but also that the Lagidae founded a unique centre for the advancement of scientific and technical learning as well as social space for interdisciplinary and international contact, thus knowledge-exchange.

As it was under royal patronage it attracted not only poets and men of letters into the city, but the most eminent scholars of the day – geometers, astronomers, physicians, historians, critics and grammarians. These ‘museum pensioners’ ... lived in community, close to the palace. They had no taxes to pay and no other duties to perform ... and a vast dining hall where they took their meals together.

(ibid., 189)

Marrou is keen to point out that although the *Museum* was unique, it did not spring up out of a ‘philosophical void’ but rather was a more formalised institution related to earlier philosophical communities (e.g. Pythagoreans) and leading onto many more such institutions (e.g. the Academy, Lyceum and Garden of Epicurus). Barnes (2004) notes that Galen’s *Commentarius in Hippocratis Epidemias III* includes several references to the library in the second century CE, and MacLeod (2004) reports that between the first and the sixth centuries CE, other libraries were established in Alexandria within the *Serapeum* and *Caesareum* temples. However, he notes that the first extended discussion that survives of the library is the *Letter of Aristeeas* (c. 180–145 BCE). The latter, begun by Cleopatra and completed by Octavian, featured in Philo’s *Legatio ad Gaium* (*Delegation to Gaius Caligula*, 22.151); with the former, according to Brazil (2004), holding the overflow from the Great Library. MacLeod (2004) suggests that these were public institutions and, unlike other private library predecessors, were freely accessible (at least in theory) to the greater public, that is to anyone who could prove themselves a worthy scholar. However, much like modern barriers to participation in the formal education system, such inclusion would have been heavily biased towards those who were literate, elite and of course males of the dominant ethnicity.

Pritchard (2015) highlights this inequality in access and participation in such traditional education in ancient times. For instance, in ancient Athens, participation issues are seen from the late fifth century, persisting through various ‘trends in education’ over the centuries (from the traditional ‘wrestling school’ and ‘gymnasium’ to the more modern ‘sophist’ schools of thought). Pritchard suggests that the notion of social class in some ways parallels, but in other ways is distinct from, social classes which we would recognise today, for instance:

Athenians divided themselves up on the basis of military roles, income bands, occupations, or places of residence (Vartsos 1978). But the distinction which they used much more often than others and which demarcated the most important social cleavage was between *hoi plousioi* (“the wealthy”) and *hoi penētes* (“the poor”).

(ibid., 114)

Even when granted access, the family of a student would need to cover the fees of at least three teachers, pay by course of study and maintain their free time for education and exercise (ruling out those needing to work). Alternatively, Pritchard points out:

Archaeology indeed confirms that many poor citizens had quite high levels of literacy and hence must have as boys attended the classes of a *grammatistēs*. On closer inspection, it appears that attending such classes was not prohibitively expensive nor something which stopped *paidēs* from helping out with the farms or the businesses of their families.

(ibid., 121)

Despite such social barriers, city-states advocated centres of learning, and their use by citizens and visiting scholars, as signs of prestige for the city, as well as valuable resources for increasing the knowledge and potential of its citizenry. Although it is hard to disentangle information about the ‘Great Library’ of Alexandria from myth (MacLeod 2004), it is clear that its flourishing was associated with not only a display of wealth and success for the region but also with lofty goals of research and knowledge as status. Similarly, its destruction became synonymous with the demise of cultural and public knowledge. An analogy might be made with modern libraries, which in certain parts of the world are re-positioning themselves as the focus point for learning city developments. A modern equivalent is illustrated in Canadian cities such as Vancouver, where libraries have led learning city initiatives in that country.¹ Furthermore, the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina is an example of how the modern age seeks to continue the learning trajectory from the ancient city of Alexandria to modern, to help put Egypt at the ‘center of the world of learning’ (Mourby 1999), although this may reveal more about modern identity building, and the ‘badge’ of a learning city, rather than any historical or educational reality.

Beyond the Mediterranean context for learning in past cultures, one can observe indigenous forms of learning, such as those existing in other parts of Africa that also provide interesting ancient parallels for learning cities. Several parts of Africa boast ancient cities that have been the centres of learning.

Hermetic frontiers were drawn between the civilizations of Ancient Egypt and Nubia and those of the peoples south of the Sahara. It is true that the history of Africa north of the Sahara has been more closely linked with that of the Mediterranean basin than has the history of sub-Saharan Africa, but it is now widely recognized that the various civilizations of the African continent, for all their differing languages and cultures, represent, to a greater or lesser degree, the historical offshoots of a set of peoples and societies united by bonds centuries old.

(Ajayi 1989, xxiii–xxiv)

Biao, Esaete and Oonye (2013) argue that most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa can provide illustrations of such cities. They cite, in West Africa, Timbuktu, Oyo, Ife and Songhai – and in Central Africa, the cities of Ndongo and Luba, which they argue ‘dazzled human minds with their promotion of knowledge and trade’ (470). Moreover, between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries in Southern Africa, it is said that the Monomotapa city-state, ‘stood out as not only a city of lovers of knowledge but also a city that exported knowledge to surrounding states’ (470). A more detailed discussion of African civilisation, from pre-history and ancient civilisations to post-colonialism, is found in the magisterial eight-volume *General History of Africa*, published by UNESCO (1981–1993); specifically the work of Mokhtar (1981) on ancient civilisations and El Fasi (1988) on the period between the seventh and eleventh centuries, and the introduction of Islamic influences is of relevance.

Longworth and Osborne (2010) argue for another shift in the focus of learning cities during the period of growth of Islam, from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries CE, although it should be noted that, as with many other regions, such learning practices were deeply influenced by those of ancient Greece. Cities within which learning was pre-eminent in this period include, among others, Damascus, Cairo, Tripoli, Jerusalem, Cordoba and Fez. Citing Hill (1993) they report that:

By the 10th century, Cordoba had 700 mosques, 60,000 palaces, and 70 libraries, the largest of which had 600,000 books. The library of Cairo had two million books, while the library of Tripoli is said to have had as many as three million books before it was destroyed by Crusaders. The number of important and original medieval Arabic works on the mathematical sciences far exceeds the combined total of Medieval Latin and Greek works of comparable significance.

(Longworth and Osborne 2010, 368)

Elsewhere in the Middle East, the example of Gaza is of interest. Butt (1995) notes its position on the north-south highway (the *Via Maris* or *Way of the Sea*), its strategic importance as a crossroads and centre of trade throughout much of early history, and suggests its cosmopolitanism, as travellers and merchants shared information and ideas, as being of importance to its reputation as a place of learning. It was seen in the times of Darius (c. 517 BCE) as a bridge between Persian Egypt and Persian Asia, and after its conquest by Alexander the Great and its organisation as a polis or city-state (332 BCE), it developed a reputation as a flourishing centre of Hellenic philosophy and learning.

The Hellenistic/Greek influences of Alexander and his successors were supplemented by other cultures, often through invasion: for example by the Egyptians under Ptolemaic rule (301–198 BCE) and then after a period under the Hasmonaeans around 62–3 BCE. There were further socio-cultural influences in the form of Rome under whom Gaza retained its importance as a centre of trade and where cultures of east and west continued to mix (*ibid.*). By the fifth and sixth centuries CE under Byzantine Christianity it was known for its inhabitants' artistic skills as well as for culture and learning and continued to be an important trading centre. Lawson (2004, xxi) cites the examples of Procopius of Gaza (c. 465–528 CE) 'a polymath who wrote on earthquakes, mechanical devices and theology'. Procopius was noted as a teacher, a rhetorician and a leading member of the Gaza School and is seen as developing a synthesis of pagan (Hellenic) and Christian philosophy and culture (ter Haar Romeny 2007, 174). Quiroga Puertas (2011, 1) links the work of Procopius more specifically to modern notions of learning cities:

Modern scrutiny of the works of Procopius of Gaza highlights the methodological concerns which permeate studies on late antique literature: the study of the intellectual and religious life of important urban centres such as Gaza; the labelling of a prolonged succession of teachers and educational centres as "schools".

In addition, also looking to the past, we can see that Rome had many parallels with modern cities in terms of the planning and administration of daily life. If we think of modern learning cities as learning organisations, which seek to harness all stakeholders to drive the city's socio-economic growth and development, we can see many parallels with Ancient Rome. Issues of well-being, economic growth, security, culture and social cohesion continue to be matters of concern and the focus of policy initiatives in the modern Learning City. Robinson (1994) in her comprehensive study of city planning and

administration, and the legal juridical frameworks and legislation that underpinned such structures in Ancient Rome, suggests that a concern with similar issues, and for similar reasons, can be observed.

In relation to issues we would recognise as related to the modern conception of health and well-being, Robinson (ibid.) notes the concern of the city's rulers, both under the Republic and during the Imperium, and their efforts towards the supply of clean, fresh drinking water through the building of aqueducts and the creation of sewer systems, drains, public baths, open spaces and latrines as well as the encouragement of exercise and access to fresh air. This parallels modern concepts as laid out by UNESCO (2013) in its Key Features of Learning Cities in which promoting sustainable development (Focus Area 1.3) is argued to be one of wider benefits of such development. In relation to economic growth and security, it created an environment where merchants and traders could operate in relative safety within a system of relative legal oversight of contracts and tenders; regulated the provision of services, including markets, prostitution, eating houses and inns; and instituted controls over trades and professions. In terms of social cohesion, we may note not only the opportunity such spaces afford for knowledge-exchange and cross-cultural contact but also their role in meeting the cities' more basic needs, such as feeding the city with the distribution of free grain (although eligibility criteria existed, and these changed over time):

In 5 BCE Augustus issued a largesse to the urban plebs, of whom there were then 320,000 eligible members. In 2 BCE there was another special census by neighbourhoods which left a list of perhaps 200,000 recipients of free grain.

(Robinson 1994, 153)

In relation to culture (and as a force for social cohesion), Robinson (ibid.) draws attention to the provision of shows and spectacles including the *ludi* and provides an alternative view to that commonly held noting that the majority of days of public games were devoted to theatrical performances. The number of spectators attending events at the *Circus Maximus* (capacity 150,000) and the *Colosseum* (capacity 50,000) would require special planning and the deployment of security and police in current times, and Robinson indeed notes the efforts of the state to enforce law and uphold public order.

It is suggested that from this brief overview of Robinson's work the degree of planning and administrative oversight such a complex and populous city as Rome would require is quite clear. It required not just scribes and clerks, but mathematicians and engineers, highly skilled metalworkers and stone masons to name but a few of the specialised

personnel, who, along with numerous labourers, did the actual work at hand. Importantly, it would also require systems and infrastructure to train such skilled and technical personnel. However, according to Robinson (1994, 212),

... we know relatively little about the clerks, the office staffs, who were busy with the very large quantities of paperwork that the institutions of local government required, issuing licenses, putting out jobs (which varied from the tiny to the very large) to tender and keeping records.

Moreover, and this reinforces the parallels between ancient and modern Learning Cities, Robinson in her conclusion suggests:

There were opportunities for recreation and leisure, freely or cheaply open to all inhabitants of the City; public health was an aim of public policy ... basic food was provided regularly, again either freely or cheaply, for a significant proportion of the population ... Rome could not have grown and survived as a city if social stability had not been normal.

(Robinson 1994, 212)

In conclusion, when we analyse the features of learning in ancient cities in aiming to draw parallels with modern conceptions, we find more than simply libraries and scholars with their small coterie of followers at the centre of city learning. We can also find examples of broader notions of learning as it related to health and well-being, socio-economic development, security, culture and social cohesion, just as in the features that UNESCO is currently promoting in its Global Network of Learning Cities.² This and other modern models we now consider.

Modern learning cities

In addition to the *Age of Antiquity*, in the domain of learning regions/cities, Longworth and Osborne (2010) highlight further ages towards defining such concepts: the *Age of Innocence*, the *Age of Experimentation*, the *Age of Advance*, the *Age of Understanding* and the *Age of Consolidation*. They point out that although in the 1970s some initiatives arose, it was only in the 1990s during the *Age of Innocence* that significant fuelling occurred for the modern conception of learning cities, which advocated for a generalised culture supporting various forms of lifelong learning. The early 1990s was marked by seminal conferences in Gothenburg held by the OECD, in Rome by the European Lifelong Learning Initiative (ELLI), and in North America by

the American Council on Education. The IAECs was established in Barcelona and a charter for learning cities and regions created by ELLI. During the *Age of Experimentation* around the turn of the last millennium, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE 1998) in the United Kingdom published practice and progress guidance for Learning Cities, and the first EC-funded projects were carried out; the OECD's (2000) learning regions project was initiated and the characteristics of learning cities began to be explored. In the *Age of Advance* in the first decade of this century preliminary experimentation extended into implementation with the Learning Regions developments, with Germany and Australia among the most significant. The *Age of Understanding* throughout the same decade was marked by an explosion of European projects with firm objectives and an increasing focus on benchmarking and measurement of the contribution of stakeholders and the development of training. The *Age of Consolidation* referring to the present (at that time 2010) referred to the process of integrating the work of many individual towns with countries and wider initiatives to achieve cohesion among the proliferation of learning city/region efforts. This included much of the work that involved the PASCAL International Observatory, which emerged from the OECD's Learning Regions initiative of 2000, and later that of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg (Yang and Valdes-Cotera 2011; Yang 2012).

Current dominant themes of the learning society, learning region and learning city

The idea of the learning society framework is comprehensive in its perspective and is not tied to formal learning or a formalised space. Therefore, it includes formalised learning (for instance those leading to recognition, qualifications, etc.) as well as informal (structured but not leading to formal qualifications) and non-formal (unstructured and often self-directed learning; National Adult Learning Survey 2012) learning. In this sense it is a *lifewide* concept, an idea crystallised in the EC's *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, which suggests that this

enriches the picture by drawing attention to the spread of learning, which can take place across the full range of our lives at any one stage in our lives. The 'lifewide' dimension brings the complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal learning into sharper focus. It reminds us that useful and enjoyable learning can and does take place in the family, in leisure time, in community life and in daily work life.

(European Commission 2000, 8)

Such frameworks, and the models within, also routinely conceptualise learning as not time-limited but rather occurring continuously throughout one's life (the *lifelong learning* concept), and importantly it is place (i.e. community, city or region) which many researchers highlight as the 'catalyst' to facilitate learning. Current literature defines the learning city/region in various ways, but crudely we can think of it as a continuum. At one end there is an economic focus on creating an infrastructure of education and training provision that might attract inward investment from business, with an emphasis on institutional environments that support private and social learning at all levels (Wolfe 2002) and an infrastructure that supports the flow of knowledge and ideas (Florida 1995). Such perspectives also draw upon theories of innovation and systems that promote innovation (Larsen 1999).

This innovation emphasis is perhaps a major difference between modern initiatives and ancient learning cities, although the cities of antiquity also championed certain innovations. The 'entrepreneurial' aspects of the 'knowledge-economy' are perhaps less overt but can be seen underlying some urban advances. For example, Robinson (1994) cites technical advances and innovation in the areas of drainage and sewers in relation to public health (101) and related civil engineering innovations in the form of bridges, aqueducts and canals (71). The requirement to attract and retain commerce and trade suggests other similarities in terms of rule of law, weights and measures, facilities for credit and banking (as in Imperial Rome), and both ancient and modern, it could be argued, have to reproduce labour power, protect property and maintain social cohesion (114, 171). At the other end of the continuum for modern learning cities is the creation of learning cities/regions surrounding the needs of supporting learning networks, promoting and enhancing social cohesion/inclusion, and enabling empowerment and social justice, which were at the core of the EC's R3L initiative (Smith 2003). It is perhaps in this area particularly in relation to empowerment and social justice, alongside innovation and socio-economic development, that we see a distinction between our conceptualisation of ancient and modern learning cities.

As yet, steps to operationalise key features of learning cities, through their existing data, have been limited. Harnessing novel technology and methodological approaches (such as in the fields of archaeology, urban planning and social sciences) from the field of Big Data offers possibilities to provide more holistic views of urban life (past, present and future). Furthermore, Big Data offers possibilities to explore both ancient and modern cities in ways that until recently might have previously been unimaginable.

Big Data

Big Data refers to the complex sources of information created and stored by organisations, including traditional databases (such as transportation use, education metrics and social services use), and more technologically diverse sources of data, such as social media, geographical mapping data and weather (see Lido *et al.* 2016 for review). According to Lynch (2008) there are various ways in which data can be 'big'; experts agree that the determining characteristic is not size, although such data sets are likely to be beyond the capacity of most 'traditional' database systems to manage. The more defining feature is the complexity of the data, such as its variety and form; the rapidity of its development and change; and the need for novel methods to capture, analyse and visualise it. This section seeks to introduce the conceptions of Big Data and describe how modern techniques for Big Data collection and analysis have been applied to ancient cities, before then moving to its recent applications in modern learning city initiatives. This will lead in a final section to identifying the need for repositories to capture, link and make available historical urban data.

As Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier (2013, 14) state in their recent book:

Since Aristotle, we have fought to understand the causes behind everything. But this ideology is fading. In the age of Big Data, we can crunch an incomprehensible amount of information, providing us with invaluable insights about the what rather than the why. We're just starting to reap the benefits: tracking vital signs to foresee deadly infections, predicting building fires, anticipating the best moment to buy a plane ticket, seeing inflation in real time and monitoring social media in order to identify trends.

The recent work of Boeri (2013) places the recent concept of 'Big Data' within the framework of information processing theories of philosophers, such as Aristotle, Marshall McLuhan, and Thomas Aquinas. His book links these theoretical concepts of modern-day big business data analytics to those of the past. For instance, we could exploit existing historical Big Data on Ancient Rome, including administrative data on grain shipments, army records, water provision and miles of sewers to contrast with modern data. In this way, we can see that the new zeitgeist surrounding Big Data approaches is not used exclusively in the pursuit of examining contemporary phenomena. Modern Big Data visualisations and simulations can help us to better immerse ourselves within the traditions of ancient learning cities,

including the applications of spatial analysis to archaeological findings to identify areas of urbanisation, trade routes and historical links of occupation between sites. Additionally, computer modelling allows more immersive three-dimensional (3D) visualisations of antiquity and allows us to 'travel back in time' and experience the built environment and travel routes of the past. For instance, Sargent and Malcolm (1997) developed a simulation to travel north through the six divisions of the Nile River.

The work of Sir Alan Wilson and colleagues is an example of applying modern Big Data collection and analysis to our understanding of past city success. Wilson and colleagues highlight the use of Big Data and current modelling techniques in evaluating the success (and failure) of ancient cities. Bevan and Wilson (2013) present a case study from Bronze Age Crete in order to 'consider the evolutionary trajectory of settlements and physical routes over time' (2415). Further to this, Davies *et al.* (2014) have used Big Data analytics to investigate the past and contrasted Middle Bronze Age versus Iron Age settlements in Syria. They were able to identify factors affecting the size, importance, movement and site interactions of various settlements. 'The results suggest the importance of [changing] political and historical factors in these periods' (ibid., 141). Fry and Wilson (2013) used Big Data modelling to determine modern production levels of international trade and national economies using four sectors: food, natural resources, manufactured goods and labour, whilst Pagliara *et al.* (2012) modelled employment locations within cities and regions. Therefore, the work of Sir Alan Wilson, when taken as a whole, indicates how novel approaches using big, complex data sets and modern statistical, analytic and modelling tools can tell an interesting story regarding why certain cities/regions thrive, and others fail. Emerging technologically innovative research can work across disciplines, historical, archaeological and modern urban studies, to move beyond simply extrapolating historical processes from modern data and give a richer context to existing archaeological and historical evidence when describing how regions might interact with each other; it can identify physical and cultural exchange of ancient cities and contrast this with modern urban models of sustainable development.

While technology is often harnessed in pursuit of learning city objectives in contemporary society, whether as Intelligent Communities (Lee-Archer and McKeon 2017), Smart Cities (European Commission 2012) or the exploratory tools mentioned earlier, technology is also increasingly being harnessed to provide us with new insights and information on ancient cities and civilisations. The use of remote sensing technologies and satellite imagery, is allowing

archaeologists the ability to reassess and, in some cases, discover new information about infrastructure, planning and resource use in ancient cities and civilisations (Parcak 2009; Wilkinson 2009):

When using satellite remote sensing for excavation ... the archaeological team can use the electromagnetic spectrum and broader visual detection to reveal features not apparent on the ground. Satellite remote sensing, in a sense, acts as an aerial geophysical sensor, identifying potential buried features such as walls, streets, or houses.

(Parcak 2009, 5)

Parcak (ibid.) provides details of some of the recent developments in satellite remote sensing and presents case studies which include the Angkor Wat complex in Cambodia, the city of Homs in Syria and the Nile Delta and Middle Egypt. Directly related to our comments on Ancient Rome, recent work on Portus (Salomon *et al.* 2014), established under Claudius, enlarged by Trajan and the principal maritime port for the movement of goods to Rome from the first to the sixth centuries CE, has provided new insights into the size, scale and scope of this ancient infrastructure. In such instances, space- and ground-sensing technologies, in combination with prior knowledge, have provided researchers with new insights into the complex infrastructure of roads, canals and aqueducts to be found alongside massive harbour towns (Keay, Parcak and Strutt 2014). And yet, such knowledge is often limited to a few experts within specific disciplines, rather than as an interdisciplinary starting point for a conversation on what this might mean globally.

Urban big data for learning cities

Increasingly there has been government policy and academic research emphasis pushing for transparency and opening data to the public (Lido 2014). For example, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded the ‘Big Data Network’ initiatives as a vehicle to address societal challenges. Part of this initiative has been the creation of the UBDC at the University of Glasgow in 2014. The UBDC seeks to address issues such as sustainability, social mobility, transport efficiency, communications, sense of place and links with a variety of education-related variables and outcomes. In the field of education – as well as philosophy and history – Big Data is still a ‘niche topic’ (Eynon 2013, 237). Mostly Big Data has been applied in education towards ‘learning analytics’ to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of education delivery (e.g. Niemi and Gitin 2012). Yet recent work has begun moving beyond simple conceptions of ‘big’ to

more complicated pictures of learning embedded within place (Lido *et al.* 2016). Eynon suggests that future Big Data work must apply its tools to ‘empower, support and facilitate practice and critical research’ (ibid.). It can embed learning, not only in place but within historical and social context as well, building broader, more naturalistic pictures of urban life and city-engagement.

The UBDC hosted the integrated Multimedia City Data (iMCD) project to create an open-use ‘data resource’ for academics, policy practitioners and the general public to access, and to learn more about their city, exploring who is engaging with it and how to improve the lives of its citizens. The data is housed alongside other large, publicly available data sets within the UBDC data archive (e.g. satellite, cycling app and educational participation and outcome data). The iMCD created a large data set of essentially ‘learning city metrics’ (and measures of urban participation). This was accomplished first with a large-scale data crawl capturing social media (textual and visual), covering a range of learning city hashtags (capturing urban events, such as the Commonwealth Games and the Scottish independence referendum).

The social media capture was undertaken alongside a large-scale survey of the greater Glasgow area. This survey of 1,500 households investigated the extent to which values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and literacies influence behaviours and activity within the greater Glasgow area. In the field of learning, the survey generated data regarding many of the 42 UNESCO indicators for learning cities, as well as cultural, civic and sustainable area engagement. The social media and survey data were supplemented by global positioning system (GPS) tracking (geolocating travel patterns for one week) and lifelogging camera images (a wearable camera taking images every few seconds over 48 hours’ worth of travel). Thus, the iMCD resource provides rich and complex data regarding the lives of these citizens. It provides a more holistic ‘snapshot’ of modern urban life for representative households in the Greater Glasgow area.

Such data, as an opus, provide a 3D picture of peoples’ daily activity and mobility. Education participation can be examined alongside wider attitudes, behaviours and participation (physically and socially) in the city. This repository was created as a model for how such data can be utilised, not just by academics but by other key stakeholders, to improve the quality of life within the city of Glasgow and contiguous region, as well as provide global comparisons in future. From such repositories, visual and statistical models can be developed to explore the relationship between education, place, transport, sustainability, cultural and civic engagement and other demographic factors in and around the city of Glasgow. Whilst our initial case is

Glasgow, we envisage that the model can be adapted for other cities, recognising that each city may wish to create an index using selected key features relevant to its priorities.

Conclusions: learning cities future

This chapter introduced the concept of the *Learning Society* (Hutchins 1970) as an educational philosophy, which has permeated the ethos of many regions throughout eras of history. Around the world there are a number of discrete initiatives within individual cities or regions, from Canada to South Africa, Australia and beyond, with the most comprehensive developments in the last decade in Asia. International and interdisciplinary scholars, cross-culturally and across historical periods, have noted links between learning and place, developing geographically based learning concepts – but few explore how these links are expressed over time.

This chapter outlined conceptions of learning cities, with an overview of exemplars from the past, such as ancient centres of learning, illustrating how learning in antiquity placed an emphasis on the role of place, with implications for culture, health and well-being, social cohesion, inclusion and socio-economic success, as persistent learning city themes throughout the ages. However, it acknowledged cultural as well as historical specificity and that the ancient concept of the city is widely different from modern notions (which vary in themselves considerably). Unlike in modern times, evidence of urbanisation is not enough to be equated with ancient notions of cities, such as Greek notions of city as polis or ‘city state’. The current use of novel Big Data techniques (analysis, modelling and visualisation) has been outlined, including using novel technology to revisit the success of cities past, contrasting them with modern urban approaches. Modern conceptions and exemplars of learning cities were explored for relevant themes which persist from antiquity to today. We now conclude with implications for future directions of learning cities and global implications of such initiatives.

Despite the aims of social and economic benefits of learning society approaches past and present, authors such as Preisinger-Kleine (2013) and Longworth and Osborne (2010) are quick to point out the pitfalls of such approaches by governments and smaller funding-bodies alike. The former points to inadequacies in evaluation and quality assessment: ‘learning cities and regions manifest serious difficulties in rendering transparent the surplus value they generate, which is vital for attracting investment into lifelong learning’ (Preisinger-Kleine 2013, 521). The latter reference points to economic precarity, which affects funding and creates the need to constantly search new structures, regulations and ‘ways of thinking’ (Longworth and Osborne

2010, 398).

The work of Biao (2013) argues for a culturally embedded approach to developing learning cities, a point which is crucial to bear in mind and to operationalise in research – both for historical specificity as well as modern notion of cross-cultural differences:

The learning city concept ... is currently operational in Europe, the Americas, Australia and Asia but absent in Africa. The main point made by the chapter is that the introduction of learning city projects into Africa will succeed only if this continent's historical, cultural and epistemological realities are relied upon in the selection of an entry methodology. That methodology is here identified as 'transformative learning'.

(ibid., 3)

Biao further highlights that such methodology would need to reinforce the link between conceptions of ancient and modern city-regions within Africa. And only once such cultural and historical links are created to modern lifelong learning and learning city objectives can true change occur.

In conclusion, we can see that the notion of the learning society is ancient in origins, and many of the same lofty social (and economic) goals of urban cities (and even smaller rural and developing regions) remain largely unchanged in modern learning city initiatives. Whilst there do seem to have been initiatives to put cities as learning hubs on the map, it is still important to note that ancient thinking did not have the notion of 'learning city', in our modern sense, as a category of thought. Yet ancient links between city-state, citizenship and public knowledge have common themes which persist today. As was evidenced with the Roman Empire, both Republic and Imperium exhibited many characteristics and challenges which modern learning cities try to address – health and well-being – economic security and growth, culture and social cohesion/inclusion.

Advances in the use of novel technology to harness city data, open-data repositories and the use of Big Data in urban modelling have helped to shed light on key components of learning regions/cities past; evaluations of learning city initiatives present; and the work of designing, embedding and creating learning cities future. Big Data has an increasing role to play in examining more rich education and civic participation-linked metrics of past cities; in modern learning initiatives of a formal, informal and non-formal nature; and ultimately in future planning and maintenance of learning cities/regions. Such advances can help us to create operationalised and measurable indices and benchmarks by which flourishing learning cities/regions can be

assessed.

However, we are at the very starting part of this journey, there is much work to be done to 'open up' data regarding cities of antiquity, as well as their modern counterparts. Such diverse data sources need to be collated, linked and made available through central data repositories. Bevan (2015) points to key developments that have amounted to a revolution in remote sensing approaches in the past decade, including greater spatial accuracy, greater geographical coverage and new kinds of 3D depth in archaeological imaging. This may, for example, provide new evidence on organisation of settlements and changes over time. Researchers must continue to push for such data being offered as 'open access' data sets for reuse by other researchers and thus promote opportunities for interdisciplinary working and knowledge-exchange. Although there are clear limits to what can be inferred from any data sets, particularly limits of historical and cultural specificity, yet this perspective offers the potential to help us better understand the catalysts of learning in cities through the ages. In this way, we may be able to apply lessons from ancient cities to identify indicators of successful societies and citizens, to inform present urban practices and modern learning environs.

Notes

- 1 See <http://pie.pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow/blogentry/pie/vancouver-stimulus-paper>.
- 2 See <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities>.

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The importance of the Greek polis for Greek literature, or why Gaza?

Martin Hose

During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the city of Gaza has had its name mentioned more often than most other places in the Middle East – Gaza is or has been made a synonym for seemingly insoluble ethnic, religious and political problems in the Middle East, a synonym for a specific way in which cultures clash in the twenty-first century. The fact that Gaza is a synonym for all this may be explained – notwithstanding other indubitably important factors generated by the history of the twenty-first century – by the city's location at borders of multiple kinds, borders between religions, cultures, languages, between 'East' and 'West' and so on.

Gaza: a special case?

Some of these borders existed already in Antiquity, Gaza being located at the border between Egypt and Syria (although in Late Antiquity this was no longer a border between different powers), and for some decades at least Gaza was affected by a kind of ideological border separating Christianity and traditional religions. These – perhaps superficial – comparisons could well be continued. However, this chapter has a different purpose. It focusses on a specific quality of Gaza in Late Antiquity, the very quality that underlies all of the present volume dedicated to Gaza.

The study of late ancient Gaza faces a kind of puzzle, as indicated already by Immanuel Benzinger in his article on Gaza in Pauly-Wissowa's *Realencyclopädie*: 'In merkwürdiger Weise konzentrierte sich jetzt gegen Ende der hellenistischen Zeit in G[aza] das literarische Leben'¹ – 'In a remarkable [or: strange] way literary life became concentrated in Gaza at the end of the Hellenistic period [i.e. fifth and sixth centuries CE]'.

Indeed, in the fifth and sixth centuries – unlike in the twenty-first century – Gaza was known for a literary production of considerable quantity and quality – a quality, incidentally, which ensured that the

texts then produced would be transmitted during the Byzantine era.² One may say not only that we are quite well informed about the so-called School of Gaza, but even that this school is represented much better by preserved texts than other schools of Late Antiquity, such as the schools of Athens or, indeed, Constantinople; even the school of Antioch, which may be regarded as a rival, may claim such a title only due to the preservation of Libanius' enormous work.³

On the other hand, the literary production in Gaza, which I have just praised, consists mainly of rhetorical texts or, to quote from Benjamin Isaac's concise introduction to the Gaza inscriptions within the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, 'The fame it [sc. Gaza] eventually achieved derived from its rhetorical school, a Christian one, and not from any activity in the sphere of law, medicine or science'.⁴ But (and this why I say 'mainly') besides the predominance of rhetorical literature one can detect a kind of Christian literary discourse connected to Gaza, beginning with Marcus Diaconus and his *Vita Porphyrii*⁵ and culminating in the theological writings of Procopius of Gaza, who is the earliest writer, or compiler, of the variorum commentaries on the Holy Scriptures called *catenae* (or *σφαίρι*).⁶ We may ascribe to him *catenae* on the Octateuch, Kings, Chronicles, the Song of Songs and Isaiah. Though his authorship of a *catena* on Ecclesiastes is doubtful, it remains the case, of course, that a professor of rhetoric wrote texts such as these in Gaza.

To the twenty-first century, perhaps, this kind of *rhetorical* 'monoculture' would not be so surprising. We live in an academic world in which universities are supposed to develop (or 'to sharpen') a profile, that is, to concentrate upon particular subjects. In addition, treading carefully, we may find that in Late Antiquity, too, schools did, in some places, concentrate on specific branches of knowledge. Thus the school of (Roman) law in Beirut was famous, and in Alexandria we see Neo-Platonic philosophy⁷ focussing on mathematics (e.g. Theon of Alexandria and his daughter Hypatia) and medicine (cf., e.g., the iatrosophist Gessius who is an addressee of epistles from Aeneas and Procopius of Gaza⁸).

So, there may be nothing surprising in Gaza having developed its specific profile in the realm of rhetoric, yet this still requires some further explanation. Schools of rhetoric were a very common feature of urban life throughout the Roman Empire. Each city or larger town may arguably have had one or even more of these schools, or, at least, a teacher of rhetoric. Therefore it should be asked: how did Gaza manage to become one of the 'top addresses' – if not the 'top address' – for rhetorical studies in the fifth and sixth centuries CE? As far as I can see, this question has seldom been raised straightforwardly. Like Immanuel Benzinger, scholars in recent years have seldom done more

than register their astonishment at the quality of Gaza's literary culture⁹ or try to explain it with reference to the city's wealth, deducing culture from economic prosperity. However, it is evident that such reference to the prosperity of Gaza, while pointing out a necessary condition for any form of polis-culture, is not sufficient to explain why it was Gaza of all places (and not, e.g., Seleucia, Jerusalem, Pergamum and so forth) where literary studies flourished.

There is one exception: a line of argument first developed by Kilian Seitz in his 1892 Heidelberg dissertation, further refined by Glanville Downey and recently reformulated by Michael Champion.¹⁰ These scholars assume that Gaza profited from overcrowding in the schools of Alexandria and Antioch, and possibly even Byzantium: young intellectuals looking for a more individual education would have gone to Gaza, and so would young men from less wealthy families, unable to afford the costs of living and studying in a capital. Gaza would have been a suitable place to choose because its proximity to the capitals provided both students and teachers with a connection to the networks of Alexandria or Antioch, which they would have needed for their future careers. By this explanation the position of Gaza would be comparable to that of, for example, Reading between London and Oxford. For several reasons, it is to be doubted that this can explain Gaza's rise. First, there is no evidence for students having migrated from Alexandria (or elsewhere) to Gaza, even though professors of rhetoric are known to have done so, such as Procopius. Second, as indicated earlier, it was Gaza, not Alexandria or Antioch, that was the top place for rhetoric in the fifth and sixth centuries. This must strike us as odd, if, as Seitz's theory suggests, it were mainly second-rate students who studied in Gaza.

The Greek polis and the production of literature

Considering these problems, Gaza, as well as the flourishing of rhetorical education and the literature it generated,¹¹ ought to be positioned in a wider framework: namely the way that literary life functioned in the context of the Greek polis. Thanks to such a contextualisation, sketchy though it must remain here, it may be possible to establish in more detail why literature did so well in Gaza in the sixth century.

Putting it somewhat generally, the Greek polis, perhaps the most important constituent of Greek literary production, provided the frame for, as it were, a cultural ecosystem: as its inhabitants were constantly assembled, the polis housed and condensed (within and beyond the social borders of the city) various possible lifestyles,¹² which continuously interacted with one another, and so it constituted a mutual space of experience for literature to be inspired by and refer

to. The inhabitants of the polis could, therefore, well ‘understand’ the literature that was formed in this way. And they also figured as the audience that ancient literature mostly required. Furthermore, the polis accommodated literature both spatially (in the agora, the theatre, the odeon, gymnasia, sacred precincts, etc.) and temporally, in the chronology of the polis-calendar. It can be argued that the preservation of literary spaces by means of stable institutions must have been of particular importance. As regards the temporary spaces, the festivals,¹³ as events exempt from ‘daily’ life (due both to the citizens’ being extricated from their daily duties and to the provision of the festivals), provided the opportunity to experience art, among other things, more intensely. Finally, the polis, gathering so many people within its borders, permanently posed the question of how to achieve and, if need be, maintain social distinction. Here, too, art and, in particular, literature could step in: as the polis constituted an ‘Ermöglichungszusammenhang’, a context which enabled production of art and literature, the production of art and literature supplied imaginary worlds, ‘othernesses’ and so on, which contributed to the polis’ stability. Once we perceive these interdependencies, we might state, if somewhat too strongly, that the Greek polis required literature just as much as literature required the polis.

Yet, one important, perhaps essential, constituent of literature had to be added to the polis: literacy was required, that is, an *Aufschreibesystem* (Friedrich Kittler) had to be known and used.¹⁴ This included the materials to write on, but, of course, the need to produce forms and contents of literature that seemed worthy of being recorded and preserved was more important. By using the word ‘worthy’, I want to convey that there were producers of texts capable of writing such worthy texts and a kind of community to decide or articulate expectations regarding the ‘worthiness’ of the texts – a community whose members, therefore, had to have criteria by which to evaluate texts. Putting it in an abstract way, such criteria can be devised by means of theories or by gathering experiences, that is to say, either empirically, as it were, or by a combination of both methods.

To Greek culture and its texts, *pace*, for example, Aristotle,¹⁵ the dimension of experience was much more important than the dimension of theory. Experience, on the other hand, requires continuity and repetition. A great (perhaps even the greater) part of Greek literature was observably created within contexts of organisation that guaranteed certain forms of continuity and repetition, that is, broadly speaking, mainly the context of the Greek polis. Its institutions offered a constellation of production and performance of literature and provided opportunities for its repetition and experience.

Sparta and its festivals

I am well aware that archaic literature could be regarded as eluding or countering the theory that the polis is of foremost importance because festivals, for example, those on Delos (where we locate the performance of hymns such as the Homeric Hymn to Apollo), were organised to some degree through tribal structures. But in the case of Sparta,¹⁶ at least (despite all the ways that Sparta differs from commoner forms of polis), it is evident that the organisation and performance of the Carneia or Gymnopaedia festivals display nearly the same structures as are observed later in the festivals of other poleis.¹⁷ In this regard Sparta may, at the same time, be taken as an early example showing how important stability and the principle of repetition were to the production of literature in the Greek world.

The Gymnopaedia¹⁸ were a festival centred on competitions, *agones*, that took place, for example, between choirs of older men, adults or boys. Similar competitions were offered at other festivals, such as the Carneia, an annual festival dedicated to Apollo; every fifth year it was conducted with particular lavishness, which included musical-poetic *agones*. The Hyacinthia, another festival devoted to Apollo, also featured musical-poetic *agones*.¹⁹ These three festivals formed an annual cycle of summer festivities from July to September. It can be ascertained that they were expanded to include musical-poetic *agones* from the early seventh century onwards.²⁰ The development of Spartan festival culture went hand in hand with her increase in power and wealth in the Peloponnese. It is as yet unclear whether this was the only reason for the prosperity of the state and the festivals or whether Sparta may not also have been an important economic and cultural station on the route from east to west, as is increasingly suggested by archaeological findings.

Musical-poetic *agones* mean competition (and repetition), and competition means rivalry, which leads to participants striving to outdo each other. Though it is impossible to reconstruct the concrete organisation of the Spartan competitions, surviving reports mention that choruses competed against one another, though foreign poets did not do so.²¹ Nonetheless, the poets' music and poetry were subject to state supervision and had to observe certain rules.²²

The 'agonistic' context of poetry is reflected by the scattered testimonia and fragments of poets and musicians active in Sparta. Terpander is cited as the inventor of some striking innovations, namely the seven-stringed lyre, certain lyric forms such as the *nomos* (a song sung to the cithara) and new scales and rhythms.²³ We may surmise that the victories he won at the Carneia were due to such innovations. A faint impression of the innovative force of Sparta in poetry and music is conveyed by the fragments of the best-preserved

Some first conclusions can be drawn from these data about Sparta:

1. The festivals created structures of repetition, which in combination with their agonistic framework were conducive to permanent quality control of and innovation in the products, that is, the poems.
2. The repetitive character of the festivals was guaranteed by their religious roots. This is to say that, insofar as the festival was a way to worship a god, the polis-community felt obliged to repeat this form of worship at cyclic intervals (every year; every two, three or five years; and so on). This ensured that poetry (and, later, prose) would be regularly performed and, in most cases, regularly produced too.
3. To organise and equip the festivals a polis needed to provide some funding. A poor polis could only organise poor festivals. This restraint privileged richer communities in poetry, but it also rendered poetry heavily dependent on the economic situation of a polis.
4. A festival sustained by a 'state' or polis might by the very continuity of the festivals of that polis expect also to attract poets from abroad, or even from 'overseas', as the traditions about the Lydian origins of Terpander and Alcman indicate.
5. Via the instrument of the *theoria*, a polis and its festivals even attracted audiences from other poleis. (I may add that someone's becoming a *theoros*, a 'state pilgrim', also meant that a polis had officially decided that that person would participate, at public expense, at a festival as a 'sacred observer'.²⁶)

Athens: the classical polis

Let us now move from the archaic polis of Sparta to the classical polis of Athens. Here we can detect not only the institutions that sustain literature but also, for the first time, the spaces and places in and around a polis where in a narrower sense, public life and public cult were situated. Generally speaking, the agora, the theatre and the gymnasium were the central forums for literature.

Subsequent to the overthrow of the Athenian tyranny in 510 BCE, a development began that gradually led to citizens participating in their city's administration to what was, by ancient standards, an unusual extent; conventionally we call this 'democracy'. Athens' victory over the Persians and Sparta's withdrawal (479) gave it a leading and, in the second half of the fifth century BCE even a dominant, role in the eastern Greek world.²⁷ The importance of the Athenian navy also enhanced the standing of social groups that previously had not

participated in the polis: they finally obtained full rights to vote in the so-called 'thetic democracy'. Thus Athens came to be the centre of the political and economic structure that has sometimes been referred to as the 'Athenian Empire'. The city became rich through trade and tribute from other cities, and it was itself characterised by an internal dynamism that kept its elites in constant flux and gave political power to various strata of the population. All these factors created in Athens a constellation particularly favourable to 'literature' for this political dynamism led the art of speaking²⁸ to develop swiftly in different and distinct sites: the *ekklesia* (to which is owed the furthering and enhancement, if not the creation, of the instruments of 'deliberative' oratory); the courts (where judicial oratory flourished); and public festivities, for example, the official funerals of polis-soldiers slain in war (which inaugurated epideictic oratory). Adding to this threefold functioning of oratory, permanent repetition of 'speech-situations' (especially in the *ekklesia* and the courts) instilled professional skills into orators and rhetorical handbooks.²⁹

On the other hand, the dynamics of the polis led to a repurposing of festivals, such as the Panathenaea and, especially, the Dionysia, in which Athens celebrated herself and, in so doing, reaffirmed her new order.³⁰ Already during the reign of the tyrants the festival of Dionysus had been organised as a lavish event with a new form of choral performance (probably in 534), but now it was turned into a central site in the shaping of political identity.³¹ The polis was ostensibly present during this festival from start to finish: at the beginning, the archons selected the poets, and at the end, all who had participated in the festival had to give an account of their roles and contributions in an *ekklesia*; this took place two days after the festival.

The importance of the Dionysia to the production of literature is well known: an innovation introduced by a skilful artist, Thespis, at the Dionysia in, probably, 534, was to put a speaker opposite a chorus, which made a kind of plot possible. Thanks to the agonistic structure of the festival in the fifth century this quickly advanced further, and tragedy was born. Under its influence, a high-spirited cult play was developed into an analogous form, comedy, which had become a part of the Dionysia from 486 onwards. Ever since 509 dithyrambic choruses also took part in an *agon*. Another festival, the Lenaea, was officially expanded in 440 BCE so as to include competitions in tragedy and comedy.

The annual performances at the Dionysia and the Lenaea alone involved 10 dithyrambs for adult male choruses, 10 dithyrambs for boys' choruses, 3 satyr plays, 13 tragedies (3 trilogies at the Dionysia and 2 dilogies at the Lenaea) and 10 comedies³² (5 per festival), all of them new works as the restaging of existing plays was first permitted

only in 386 BCE. It is reckoned that around 1,100 Athenians took part as *choreutes* at these two festivals every year (additionally many rich Athenians had to equip the productions). Suitable texts were, therefore, in high demand: the 20 dithyrambs needed annually in the Dionysia drew in poets from all over the Greek world,³³ and poets like Ion of Chios³⁴ made themselves available for tragedy, too. (To the contrary, comedy, being closely tied to internal Athenian affairs, generally required knowledge available to Athenians only.)

In Athens, as in Sparta, the competitive context of the performances put enormous pressure on the poets to innovate, as is documented by the way that tragedy changed from Aeschylus' *Persians* (472 BCE) to the last plays by Sophocles (*Oedipus Coloneus*) and Euripides (*Bacchae* and *Iphigenia Aulidensis*). These continuous innovations extended from formal characteristics, the so-called 'structural elements' (*Bauformen*),³⁵ through adaptations of other forms of art, such as choral lyric in the choral songs of tragedy, to intellectual developments,³⁶ intensified by the so-called sophistic movement. Unlike Sparta, Athens was a laboratory not only for the arts but also for ideas about human life, society and the gods. Democracy obliged the old elites to defend their interest in a public assembly (or in front of large juries consisting of ordinary citizens), political and social success both being tied to the ability to speak in public. Various Greek intellectuals, whom we name 'sophists', responded to this need by coming to Athens and offering training in return for payment. Plato's *Protagoras* displays a literary presentation of famous sophists meeting in the house of the Athenian aristocrat Callias, from which we may infer that 'modern' teachings that concerned not just rhetoric but also questions about intellectual principles were circulating in Athens in the late fifth century.

Athens attracted artists and intellectuals from all over the Greek world to visit her. This phenomenon, of which we found only traces in the case of Sparta, is quite well attested for Athens. We know or infer that there were visits by Ion of Chios³⁷; Herodotus, Parmenides and Zeno of Elea³⁸; and Democritus.³⁹ The ideas that reached Athens in this way were not unanimously perceived to be advantageous; they might well be seen as threatening, as is shown, for example, by the (admittedly problematic) reports of court cases against such thinkers as Anaxagoras.⁴⁰

These intellectual exchanges made possible a kind of 'self-observation' within the exchange or, to put it differently, not only were poetry and philosophy 'produced', but this production was also reflected upon and contemplated as a historical phenomenon: early forms of 'intellectual history' or 'theory of science'⁴¹ had arisen. This was conditioned by a development in media: The advance of writing

and book culture, though traceable throughout the Greek world, achieved a greater dynamism in Athens due to the so-called Cleisthenic reforms that followed the overthrow of the tyranny. Their structures, linked to democracy, required the ability to read and write.⁴² By the end of the fifth century, books were an everyday, if upmarket, phenomenon.⁴³ The presence of books – in Athens, it seems, at a regular book-market and, therefore, in a public place – meant the permanent co-presence of old and new poetry, old and new philosophy. This prompted the comparison of and reflection upon a body of material no longer limited (as was the case in a festival *agon*) to what had just been heard: now ‘old’ and ‘new’ could be brought into direct competition. Books also removed the restraints imposed on the amount of information to be collected and applied in the present moment. In the archaic period ‘wisdom’ had been delimited by lived experience (as embodied by Nestor in the *Iliad*, for example), but now the experiences preserved in books could be passed on independently of those who had lived them.⁴⁴ Thus Thucydides (1.22.4) assessed his historical work as a κτῆμα εἰς αἰεῖ, the sophist Hippias (DK 86 A 12, B 6, B 4) compiled a collection (*synagoge*) of the great and important thoughts of poets and writers of prose, and reflection on poetry promoted the first attempts at a theory of poetry.⁴⁵

During the second half of the Peloponnesian War the material basis of Athenian culture changed and so did, perhaps, her intellectual climate. In Thucydides’ *History* the claim could still be made that taking a special delight in experimentation was characteristic of Athens at the start of the war (thus in the Corinthian speech at 1.70), but the trial of Socrates in 399 (a key date for the polis, too) reveals far more conservative an attitude in the city. Therefore, it should not surprise us that fifth-century innovations were transformed into fourth-century institutions: at the Dionysia, ‘old’ comedies became an official part of the *agon* from 386 onwards, and in the final third of the fourth century the theatre itself was rebuilt in stone.⁴⁶ Athenian drama became an institution of the polis, and one worth studying, as is shown by Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The sophists’ revolutionary thoughts, which had encouraged Athenian aristocrats like Alcibiades and Critias to pursue an amoral political line, were transformed by Gorgias’ student Isocrates into formal education, for which again the polis formed the basis. About the year 390, Isocrates founded a proper school in Athens attended by important Athenian politicians and intellectuals. Philosophical thought about the foundations of the world and human society was also institutionalised when, in 387, Plato, contending with Isocrates, opened his school, the Academy, near Colonus, approximately 1.5 km north of Athens’ Dipylon gates, that is, outside the city walls, in the sanctuary of a hero by the name of

‘Academos’.⁴⁷ As an organisational form, philosophical schools created a new kind of constellation, in which problems could be investigated with great intensity and entire systems could be devised discursively. The Academy created the prototype of an institution which could suffer breakaways (e.g. the foundation of the Lyceum by Aristotle in 335) and which would set up branches in other places (this is evident for Alexandria, at least). At the end of the fourth century, the polis of Athens hosted four philosophical schools. Besides the Academy and ‘Peripatos’ there was Epicurus’ ‘Kepos’ (founded after 305) and Zeno’s Stoa (founded about 300), each of which attracted a significant number of students⁴⁸: reportedly 200 in the case of Epicurus and 2000 in that of Aristotle’s successor Theophrastus (Diog. Laert. 5.37). When we note also that the rhetorical training inspired by Isocrates was offered in Athens, it becomes clear that Athens had been transformed into a ‘college town’. This change had begun in the Hellenistic period and later brought even Romans like Cicero⁴⁹ and Horace to Athens; it was institutionally established in 176 CE when Emperor Marcus Aurelius set up and financed professorial chairs for each of the four major philosophical schools.⁵⁰

The gymnasium

However, this is but one dimension of institutionally organised παιδείσις in the polis. A form of education more fundamental than that found in the specialised schools of philosophy and rhetoric was offered in the gymnasia of Athens, especially in the three main ones, located outside her walls: the Lyceum,⁵¹ the Cynosarges and again another at the sanctuary of the hero Academus. From the Classical to the Hellenistic period what may have at earlier stages been a broad range of instruction and teaching developed into a more-or-less uniform institution supervised (though not necessarily funded) by the polis.⁵² Thus ‘gymnasium’ became the keyword in Hellenic higher *paideia*, a combination of physical and intellectual training, which guaranteed what may be termed the ‘Hellenic habit’. It is certain that the gymnasium served as an ‘acculturation-machine’⁵³ in Egypt (where ‘Greekness’ was explicitly associated with the gymnasium since those regarded as Greeks were referred to as οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ γυμνασίου⁵⁴), but it probably did so, too, in Hellenic or Hellenised poleis in other Near Eastern states. It seems significant that the gymnasia established from the fourth century onwards were built closer to the agora,⁵⁵ and private donations and other benefactions furnished them with expensive equipment, including buildings. German scholarship has coined the term *Verfestlichung* for this development.⁵⁶

There have been extensive finds of ostraca, inscriptions including

graffiti, and papyri that have been used to reconstruct higher education in the Hellenic and Imperial Greek world.⁵⁷ It has been variously shown, for example, by Henri-Irénée Marrou and Raffaella Cribiore, that such higher education implied the intense study of a canon of classical Greek authors and, in several instances, the production of rhetorical literature; besides, a considerable amount of poetry produced in the Imperial period and in Late Antiquity⁵⁸ is evidently rooted in the schools and their rhetorical exercises.⁵⁹ As an omnipresent by-product of this poetical training, there are numerous metrical inscriptions, inscriptions that often (though not always) display poetic skill.⁶⁰

Not only were the schools situated close to the polis, but schools and poleis alike were often associated with the festivals. In, for example, Priene, Amorgos and Miletus, the gymnasia were the places where official festival dinners were held, often with a particular place reserved for the pupils (i.e. the classes of the ephebes) of the schools.⁶¹ The schools arranged for the pupils to compete in *agones*, which were intended, one way or another, to enable the pupils to distinguish themselves as they would today by achieving high marks or similar forms of evaluation. There was a custom for the winners of such *agones* to be recorded in inscriptions set up in public places of the polis, often temple walls.⁶²

Gymnasia are also where we find libraries.⁶³ Excavations have unearthed traces of libraries in, for example, the gymnasium of Rhodes and Nyssa, and there are numerous inscriptions documenting the existence of book collections in the buildings belonging to the gymnasia.⁶⁴ A famous Athenian inscription, IG II/III² 2363, dated c. 100 BCE presents a catalogue of books that ephebes had donated to their gymnasium. So, via the schools in the gymnasia, the polis created a safe place for literature in the libraries, but then there were, of course, also entire libraries given to one polis or other, such as the famous library of Ephesus, by which Tiberius Julius Celsus Polemaenus secured himself the rank of an *euergetes* of Ephesus (one may add that he not only financed the magnificent building but also made provision for the maintenance of the library).⁶⁵

We can therefore argue that, in the Classical era, the Hellenistic period⁶⁶ and the first centuries of the Imperial Age, the polis provided, in various dimensions, an ideal environment for literature: the polis sustained various sanctuaries with more or less specific spaces (e.g. the theatre) for literature to be performed; in the sanctuaries the polis organised festivals in honour of the gods, which, in turn, brought about a demand for literature (poetry or epideictic oratory). The polis had to secure inner peace by the instrument of law and hence organised a legal system in which justice was upheld by means of

trials; this was the place for judicial oratory. In addition, the polis needed to find suitable ways to arrange its relations to other poleis and states as well as its own inner order; this was the task of the *ekklesia*, and, at the same time, was the source of symbouleutic and political oratory. The polis also supplied the means to guarantee its own future: the schools in the gymnasia were to train its future members, and in this training they produced a varied literature, primarily of a didactic nature, yet transcending these didactic purposes.

The polis in Late Antiquity

These three dimensions of literature in and by the polis may be associated with three spaces: the sanctuaries and temples, the agora as the place of politics and the gymnasium. The production and circulation of literature depended, as is easily seen, on the ‘cultural ecosystem’ of the polis, as mentioned earlier. This ecosystem was challenged during the first centuries CE by several changes, of which the emergence of Christianity⁶⁷ and finally the massive Christianisation of culture in the fifth century were only two elements.⁶⁸ There were, besides, other important developments, such as the extension of Roman citizenship to all free male inhabitants of the Roman Empire, the crises of the third century CE and the tendency towards strict political and economic regulation by the emperors ever since Diocletian. In addition, other factors relevant to the production of literature were rooted in mentality (or – with regard to the broad range of different cultures and ethnic entities with the Empire – mentalities). Thus, we may state (or assume) changes in attitude towards the human body⁶⁹ and, especially, to sexuality and nudity.⁷⁰ At some points in Plutarch’s oeuvre we learn that, for example, fertility cults which the polis had celebrated enthusiastically in the fifth century BCE were no longer understood and, therefore, were regarded as obscenities.⁷¹

These developments affected the polis and its cultural ecosystem: Diocletian’s reforms reduced the autonomy and importance of political institutions.⁷² However, it is also true that this reduction of, and other interferences in, the autonomy of the polis did not affect all the cities of the Roman Empire equally.⁷³ Therefore, in the Antioch of Libanius – at least, this seems indicated by Libanius’ *or.* 11⁷⁴ – the curial polis administration and the basic lines along which festivals were conducted appear to have remained unchanged in the middle of the fourth century.⁷⁵ The extension of Roman citizenship meant that Roman law became an important issue in the trials that took place in the polis,⁷⁶ and the change in attitude towards the human body would have had some impact on the gymnastic dimension of the gymnasium.

Some changes are detectable in urban sites in relation to these developments⁷⁷: the size of the agora began to shrink in Late Antiquity.⁷⁸ And perhaps it is significant that Libanius, when establishing his school in Antioch, did not seek accommodation in a gymnasium but rather rented some rooms in a house at the agora (*or.* 1.102) and finally even obtained houseroom in the city hall (1.104). In Libanius' speeches, we also find repeated invectives against students of law, indicating that the teachers of rhetoric were feeling the competitive force of Roman law, which they had had to face since the early third century.⁷⁹ Metaphorically speaking it might be said that, owing to these changes, the cultural ecosystem of the polis had already been weakened when Christianisation began. Therefore, we should not be surprised that literary production faded away in many places, as the development described earlier meant that pagan sacred sites and festivals were ravaged and the gymnasia met with opposition.⁸⁰ Thus only the agora remained, if weakened, as an undisputed space of the cultural ecosystem.

Gaza in Late Antiquity

Let us now return to Gaza. The city was rich, with special importance attached to the trade in frankincense and wine.⁸¹ The cult of Marnas, the 'ancestral god' of Gaza, flourished in the Imperial period.⁸² An inscription at Ostia, expressing a dedication by Gazans to Gordian III (emperor 238–244) uses the epithets *hierā*, *asylos* and *autonomos* for Gaza (IG 14.926).⁸³ This seems to indicate that the three sites of literary culture, namely, the agora, sanctuaries and gymnasium, were intact. On the famous mosaic map found in a Madaba church, Gaza is depicted as having a building that, with some probability, can be identified as a theatre.⁸⁴ As far as I know, there is no information about gymnasia at Gaza, nor about libraries. However, from the erudition displayed by the sixth-century professors of rhetoric, we may infer that there was a sufficiency of books in Gaza.⁸⁵ We read of a Gazan orator, Ptolemaeus, in an inscription from Eleusis (OGIS 596), and Libanius (*or.* 55.33) speaks with some respect of Gazan rhetoric.⁸⁶ Therefore we may assume that the cultural ecosystem was still in working order, although it produced nothing of importance at this time (or, at least, of sufficient importance to be preserved).

The situation changed with Porphyry's episcopate, beginning in 394 CE. His chronicler, Marcus Diaconus, is an interesting figure, too, insofar as he – whether this be autobiographical information or just 'self-fashioning' is unimportant for our purposes – not only admits to having come from 'Asia' to Palestine as a pilgrim but also says that he could earn a living there through his profession: he was a 'calligrapher' (VP Ch. 4). This indicates that both the production of

expensive books and the book trade were flourishing at the end of the fourth century CE in Palestine: another piece of evidence that the cultural ecosystem was intact. However, the situation changed when Porphyry destroyed the temple of Marnas in 402 CE, breaking the power of paganism in Gaza.⁸⁷ Churches were built, and the institutional link between schools of rhetoric and religious festivals was dissolved.

To a certain extent, it is easy to understand what happened to the orators of Gaza: the loss of connection with life in the polis outside the school intensified the work within. For the first time ever we hear of a Gaza professor having done something extraordinary and worth recording: I am talking of Zosimus, who, in the reign of Anastasius (491–518) or perhaps even Zeno (474–475 and 476–491), wrote commentaries on Lysias and Demosthenes, and perhaps also a biography of Demosthenes, works of which we find traces in the extant scholia on both these classical authors.⁸⁸ We do not know what position Zosimus filled in Gazan rhetorical education. One would like to think of him as a head of the school who introduced some innovation to it, something that changed the situation in Gaza. His younger contemporary Aeneas, who had studied philosophy in Alexandria, returned to Gaza and there wrote a philosophical dialogue *Theophrastus siue de immortalitate animae*.⁸⁹ And not only philosophy but also grammar came to be a focus: Timotheus of Gaza, another contemporary of Zosimus, published a book on syntax.⁹⁰ Finally, Procopius, who also had studied rhetoric in Alexandria, became head of the school on his return to Gaza.⁹¹ It is interesting that, as we learn from epistles by Aeneas⁹² and Procopius,⁹³ both of them kept up their networking with Alexandria, which is why, despite staying in Gaza, they remained part of Alexandrian intellectual discourse.⁹⁴ Additionally we find, one generation later, Choricus, who had succeeded Procopius, and Johannes, perhaps successor to Timotheus.

Gazan rhetoric had lost the gymnasium and the pagan festivals.⁹⁵ The agora had been reduced. And the bishop and the Christian church had gained considerable political power and a kind of political hegemony over the polis.⁹⁶ Our Gaza intellectuals seem to have acknowledged this. In addition, they undertook to acculturate to Christianity, with remarkable success.⁹⁷ The role and habit of the pagan orator were transformed into the role and habit of an orator most Christian. Choricus' epitaph on Procopius states that he could have been a bishop as well and that 'he with the exception of the *schema* [i.e. the ordination] was in all respects bishop' (Choricus, *epit. [or. VIII]* 21).⁹⁸ Was this a kind of intellectual mimicry or perhaps more? Be that as it may, Procopius created or shaped a new intellectual role: that of the priestly sophist,⁹⁹ and his *catenae* express

this new role in literary form. In this new role, three different strategies are distinguishable: one is the juxtaposition of traditional pagan and Christian texts. Thus one finds in Procopius' work the Christian catenae and *ekphraseis* of pagan motifs¹⁰⁰; in Choricus, encomia on the Christian Bishop Marcianus (*or.* I and II), and the defence of the mime (*or.* XXXII), which displays a purely pagan, Dionysiac position towards this form of entertainment.

Another strategy was for pagan epideictic rhetoric to take over Christian discourse¹⁰¹: this we find in the *ekphraseis* of churches by Johannes or in the rhetorical praise of Christian festivals, again in Choricus' encomia on Marcianus.¹⁰² In addition, classical rhetoric suggested a linguistic usurpation: Choricus uses classical terms to describe Christianity – the bishop is *hiereus* (*or.* VIII.21), church festivals become *enkuklioi heortai* (*or.* I.10)¹⁰³ – and finally the Holy Bible itself is called a *suggramma* (*or.* VIII.21).¹⁰⁴ With the differences thus minimised, Christianity and rhetoric have become compatible.

In Gaza – so my conclusion – we observe rhetoric succeeding by, as it were, usurping Christian discourses and Christian spaces. This meant that rhetoric could survive the Christian impact by occupying the new ecosystem of the Christian city.

Notes

- 1 Benzinger (1910), quotation at 885.
- 2 Cf. on the interest taken in this matter by the Byzantine world Hunger (1978, 94). That Gazan authors were present and held in esteem in Byzantium is illustrated, for example, by Photius, *bibl. cod.* 160 (on Choricus but also Procopius) as well as by the fact that in refuting Proclus, Nicholas of Methone (cf. Angelou 1984) extensively used a similar treatise by Procopius of Gaza; see Aly (1975, 267–268).
- 3 On this see Kennedy (1983, 133–179).
- 4 B. Isaac in Ameling *et al.* (2014, 425).
- 5 For this important text see the editions of Grégoire and Kugener (1930), and especially Hübner (2013).
- 6 See the collection in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 87. Metzler (2015) has recently published a new edition of Procopius' commentary on Genesis; see her introduction p. XI–XXXIV, which gives an up-to-date account of Procopius' importance for the tradition of the catena. See further Westberg (2013) on Procopius' rhetorical exegesis.
- 7 On this Praechter (1910).
- 8 See Watts (2009).
- 9 Cf., for example, Tiersch (2008, 69).
- 10 Seitz (1892); Downey (1958), especially 1129; Hübner (2013, 9–15); Champion (2014, 32).
- 11 On the connection between rhetoric and literature particularly in Late Antiquity, see Hose (2004).
- 12 On this topic as a whole, see Hose and Levin (2009).
- 13 On this topic as a whole, see Kannicht (1989/1996).

- 14 It seems to me significant that as Aeschylus' *Persians* and their presence in Athenian memory testify, at least in the fifth century, the transformation from performance to text and book was taking place, a clear sign that literacy was felt to be needed by the polis.
- 15 It seems significant to me that whatever theory Aristotle construed, it was also regularly based on collections of data; this holds for the *synagoge technon* of his rhetoric as well as for the collection of *politeiai* in his *politica* and so on.
- 16 Concerning Sparta and Athens see Hose (2016), where the importance of both states as places of literary production is expounded in more detail and with more references.
- 17 Ps.-Plutarch, *De musica*, reports that the first school of lyric poetry was founded in Sparta by Terpander, the second one by Thaletas of Gortyn, Xenodamus of Locri, Pylmnestus of Colophon and Sacadas of Argos, at whose initiative the festival of the Gymnopaedia was founded (*De mus.* 1134B = Thaletas test. 7 Campbell). With the exception of Terpander, we know very little about the poets cited in this report. However, it is remarkable that all of them – including Terpander, who is said to have been native of the island of Lesbos – came from outside Sparta (from Cyrene, Asia Minor, etc.) and yet were linked to this Spartan festival, the Gymnopaedia: thus one may conclude that a seventh-century Spartan festival (the traditional foundation date is 668 BCE) attracted poets from all over the Greek world. Its appeal rested, it would seem, on generous arrangements made for the festival, both in its structural stability and in its provision of prestigious prizes for the poets who contributed to it. This makes clear how important the structural stability of the festival was: travelling a long distance to Sparta only became attractive to a poet if he could be sure that his poems would find conditions suitable for their recitation. Hence we may conclude that the famous wandering poets (on this phenomenon see Hunter and Rutherford 2009) detectable throughout Greek literary history from Homer ('der wandernde Sänger') to Late Antiquity could only do their job properly on the precondition of stable institutions as guaranteed by a polis.
- 18 Cf. Ps.-Plutarch, *De mus.* 1134b.
- 19 On all of this, see Nilsson (1906).
- 20 The Carneia are said to have had this kind of content since the 20th Olympiad, that is, 676/673 BCE, the Gymnopaedia since the Spartan victory at Thyrea in 546. See Athenaeus 14.63e–f and 15.678b–c, quoting the Hellenistic scholar Sosibius (FGrHist 595 F3 and F5).
- 21 See Alcman F10(a) PMGF.
- 22 This is shown, for example, by an anecdote reported by Plutarch (*Inst. Lac.* 17.238c): in order to punish Terpander for breaking a rule, the ephors nailed his lyre to a wall.
- 23 See the testimonia collected by Campbell (1988, 303–313, no. 11–23).
- 24 Already in Antiquity there was a debate as to whether Alcman was native to Sparta or had emigrated there from Lydia, but the choral songs he created sometime in the mid-seventh century acquired almost canonical status in Sparta. A large fragment of a partheneion (a song for a girls' chorus) has been preserved on papyrus, and there are other, if smaller, fragments revealing the poet's pride and skill. F14a PMGF runs thus: 'Come Muse, clear-voiced Muse of many songs, singer always, begin a new song for girls to sing'. This is evidently the proem, invoking the Muses, of a partheneion, in which Alcman attributes special weight to the aspect of the 'new'. At the same time, in the remainder of Alcman's poems it can be observed that they track a development from simple songs – in the case of the partheneia these are cult practices executed by girls, perhaps in an

- initiatary context – to demanding and highly sophisticated works of verbal art with complex metres. This development clearly expresses Sparta's achievement as a site of literature in the seventh century.
- 25 See, for example, Snell (1969).
 - 26 On this see Rutherford (2013).
 - 27 It is evident that the destruction of Miletus (494 BCE) assisted the rise of Athens as an intellectual centre.
 - 28 See the overview in Kennedy (1974).
 - 29 The frequency with which trials were held not only offered a rich opportunity to produce speeches (cf. the *Corpus Lysiacum* or the forensic speeches of Demosthenes and Isocrates) but also evoked the comparison of and the search for the most useful rhetorical strategies. This gave birth to the 'systematic' *technē rhetorikē*.
 - 30 On this see Pickard-Cambridge (1968) and recently Sourvinou-Inwood (2011).
 - 31 The question of whether and to what extent the poetry performed at these festivals may have contributed to the Athenians' political education has been intensely discussed ever since the pioneer work by Meier (1988); see on this, for example, Carter (2011).
 - 32 On comedy, see Mensching (1964).
 - 33 Zimmermann (2008) is essential on this, especially pp. 36–41; see further, most recently, Kowalzig and Wilson (2013).
 - 34 On the unusual circumstances in the case of Ion of Chios, see Stevens (2007).
 - 35 See Jens (1971).
 - 36 It is nearly self-evident that almost the entire cosmos of 'older' Greek theological and anthropological views is put up for debate in tragedy. See on this most recently Cairns (2013).
 - 37 FGrHist 392 F13, 14, 15: these fragments attest Ion's having visited Athens.
 - 38 This is suggested by Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*.
 - 39 Diog. Laert. 9.36 (=DK 68 B 116) even attests that Democritus was astonished that no one in Athens recognised him: 'I came to Athens and no one knew me'.
 - 40 Mansfeld (1979/1980).
 - 41 This is not to contest that approaches towards literary criticism were already in existence before the fifth century and the Athenian constellation; archaic poetry evinces many reflections on issues of literary criticism, enquiring, for example, what good poetry is. However, literary criticism first appears as an independent discursive phenomenon in fifth-century Athens. See Ford (2002, 188–208).
 - 42 Missiou (2011).
 - 43 A market for (new or second-hand?) books is attested by, for example, Eupolis F 327 PCG (probably the earliest attestation) and Plato, *Apologia* 26d; see Turner (1952).
 - 44 According to Xenophon, the book collector Euthydemus hoped for this (*Mem.* 4.2).
 - 45 Cf., for example, Gorgias, *Helen* 9; Aristophanes, *Frogs*; and Sophocles' book on the chorus: *Suda* Σ 815. On the 'origins' of literary criticism, see also Pohlenz (1920/1965) and Ford (2002).
 - 46 On the changes in the drama, see Easterling (1997); further Gildenhard and Revermann (2010).
 - 47 Cf. Hoepfner (2002b) and Caruso (2013).
 - 48 This explains why Athens was interested in exerting appropriate influence on those who were appointed heads of the schools – as shown, inter alia, by the law of Sophocles dated 306 (or 305), according to which only a person who had the

- Council's or the People's explicit approval might become head of school (Diog. Laert. 5.38; Pollux 9.42; Athenaeus 13.610e–f, see Habicht 1995, 81–82; Hose 2010, 412–413).
- 49 Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 5.1.
- 50 Cassius Dio 71.32.1; Hadot (2003).
- 51 The Lyceum was, it would seem, a favourite 'hunting-ground' of Socrates'; cf. Plato, *Euthyphro* 2a; *Euthydemus* 271a; *Symp.* 223d; Aeschines of Sphettus, F2 (Dittmar); see Burnet (1924).
- 52 Cf. Kah and Scholz (2007).
- 53 Cf. Mehl (1993).
- 54 Cf. Ziebarth (1914, 167–168).
- 55 See Von der Hoff (2009).
- 56 See Hesberg (1994).
- 57 See, for example, Ziebarth (1914) *passim*, Marrou (1965) and Cribiore (2001).
- 58 On the so-called 'wandering poets', cf. Cameron (1965).
- 59 See Hose (2004).
- 60 See, for example, the collection by Merkelbach and Stauber (1998–2004); on Gaza, see vol. 4 (2002, 319–321).
- 61 On Miletus, see Ziebarth (1914, 136–147).
- 62 See Ziebarth (1914, 136–147).
- 63 Wendel (1954) still provides valuable information on libraries; see now also König, Oikonomopoulou and Woolf (2013).
- 64 See Délorme (1960, 331–332); cf., for example, Manganaro (1974).
- 65 See Hoepfner (2002c).
- 66 One may characterise the particular contribution made by the Hellenistic period to the sites of literary production as a monumentalisation and, hence, as a kind of 'petrification' thereof: the theatre, the agora and the gymnasium were all constructed in stone. See, for example, Hesberg (2009) on Hellenistic theatre, Kah and Scholz (2007) and von den Hoff (2009) on Hellenistic gymnasia, and Scholz and Wiegandt (2015) on the gymnasia of the Imperial Age.
- 67 Concerning Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, the Romans and so on, one may state that early Christianity also used the structures of the Graeco-Roman polis in addressing Christian communities shaped or defined to a certain extent by the polis.
- 68 See the contribution of Jacobs in this volume.
- 69 Cf., for example, Dodds (1965), Brown (1988) and Brown (1992).
- 70 As, for example, Plato, *Symp.* 182c, shows, male nudity was culturally accepted in the Classical Age.
- 71 Cf., for example, Plutarch, *De cupiditate div.* 8.527d on the disappearance of phallic processions in the cult of Dionysus. Concerning the Christian view of such cults as being αἱρεσις, see Clemens Al. *Protr.* 34.2 (p. 25,22 St.). See Merkelbach (1988, 113).
- 72 This is not the place to discuss in detail the controversies, inspired by Liebeschuetz (2001), as to whether Late Antiquity brought decline or simply change to the polis. Krause and Witschel (2009) offer a broad and intense discussion of Liebeschuetz's main arguments.
- 73 See, for a general outline, Krause and Witschel (2009) and Grig (2013).
- 74 See Fatouros and Krischer (1992).
- 75 Cf. Petit (1955) and, especially, Liebeschuetz (2004).
- 76 Wieacker (1964) still offers a useful introduction.
- 77 Cf. Jacobs (2013) and Saradi (2006) for a general outline of these changes.

- 78 See Hoepfner (2003).
- 79 Cf., for example, Libanius *or.* 2.43–2.44; *or.* 4.18; especially *ep.* 1203,1. See on this Wolf (1952, 54–55) and Hose (2000, 289–300).
- 80 Cf. Délorme and Speyer (1986), especially 172–174.
- 81 See Glucker (1987, 86–112).
- 82 Cf. Mussies (1990).
- 83 Cf. Isaac in Ameling *et al.* (2014, 425).
- 84 Cf. Donner (1992, 75–76):
- Directly inside the eastern gate we see another square place with some kind of passage-way to the north, and leading to a large semicircular building surrounded by colonnades on its southern side, most likely a theatre, whose stage even has the conventional three gates.
- At any rate, the theatre was present in the imagery of Gazan rhetoric: see Matino (2006).
- 85 Cf. Choricus on Procopius' personal library, *epit.* 16.
- 86 So does, in a similar way, the odd notice in the *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium* 32 (*Aliquando autem et Gaza habet bonos auditores [...]*); we should probably suspect the translation from the original Greek to be faulty.
- 87 See on this Trombley (2001, 187–245), Hahn (2004) and Sivan (2008, 331–338).
- 88 On Zosimus see Gärtner (1972).
- 89 Champion (2014).
- 90 See Kaster (1988, 368–370, no. 156).
- 91 It is remarkable that there was even a Latin orator, Hierius, at Gaza; see Procopius *ep.* 149.
- 92 See Massa Positano (1961).
- 93 See Garzya and Loenertz (1963).
- 94 See on this Watts (2009, 115–117), with reference to Ruffini (2004).
- 95 There was an exception, namely the Rosalia, a festival set up in honour of the dead, which was easily Christianised. See Nilsson (1914/1951) and Amato (2010).
- 96 Cf. Hübner (2013, 11–15).
- 97 This acculturation seems to me to be the *proprium* of Gaza's special situation in the sixth century, not so much (as Tiersch 2008, 90 claims) the resistance of the pagans against Christianisation.
- 98 Foerster and Richtsteig (1929, 117): ὥστε πλὴν τοῦ σχήματος μόνου πάντα ἦν ἱερῆς.
- 99 Cf. Ashkenazi (2004).
- 100 See Friedländer (1939).
- 101 Recently Champion (2014) has offered an interesting new approach for understanding Gaza: he tries to describe the Gazan constellation as the 'permeability of cultures', which, it seems to me, can shed new light on the licenses the 'actors' take, as described earlier. Nevertheless, it seems to me important to stress the active attitude towards Christian discourse that the protagonists of paganism display – as I have tried to do in this chapter.
- 102 Cf. on this Litsas (1982). This article poses some problems insofar as it does not take into due account the panegyric rhetoricity of Choricus' descriptions.
- 103 This strategy prevents us from identifying the festivals Choricus describes, cf. Litsas (1982, *passim*).
- 104 Cf. Ashkenazi (2004, 200–201).

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Augustine's rhetorics of theology

Religious debates in late antique Carthage

Therese Fuhrer

On the setting: Roman Carthage

Cities provide their inhabitants with an identity, a cultural framework and personal recognition, as well as a space to live in, and so they necessarily play a prominent part also in debates about social and cultural identities that are conducted in texts, including historical, fictional and mythological narratives. In Roman literature this is especially true of the city of Rome itself, which has earned for itself over the course of its millennia-long history the honoured titles of *Roma aeterna* and *caput mundi*. As a result, the identity of other cities in literature is often moulded either as a 'second Rome' or in a contrast to Rome.¹

The reflections I shall present here focus on Roman Carthage, which, after the destruction of the Punic capital and the ritual cursing by the younger Scipio Africanus in 146 BC, was refounded by Caesar in March 44 BC as the *Colonia Concordia Iulia Carthago* and in 29 BC, 15 years later and after a ritual exorcism, was reconstructed at great expense and effort by Octavian. Octavian or, as he later became, Augustus laid out around the hill of the Byrsa, on the model of a Roman *castrum*, an orthogonal system of streets and *insulae*; he had the Byrsa levelled by more than 5 m and re-formed it into a Roman centre on the Roman pattern.² Whereas Alexandria had in the Civil War become Rome's great rival, Octavian's/Augustus' refoundation set the focus on Carthage, a city of western North Africa, which he also immediately made an administrative seat. He thus remodelled it as a Roman centre following the template of Rome.³

With the Augustan refoundation the 'success story' of Roman Carthage begins, a story continued by historiography and rhetoric.⁴ The African city was integrated into the Roman picture of history and turned into a commemorative site of the Punic-Roman War and the Roman victory. Augustus and his urban planners succeeded in prominently placing in the central locations of the city – in analogy to

Rome – monuments that would give the city an Augustan character.⁵ In much the same way as a Roman street plan was laid over the ruined city, an attempt was also made to reorganise its religious past, though not without integrating the older (Punic) tradition.⁶ The Antonines and Severans developed the city further, providing it with theatres, baths and a commercial harbour, and so turning it into the economically flourishing cultural metropolis of Roman North Africa.⁷ In the perceptions of the ancient cultural and political discourses of the high empire, Carthage challenged Alexandria for the rank of third city of the empire after Rome and Constantinople, especially as an educational centre whose institutions attracted and united the social and intellectual elite of western North Africa.⁸ And, not least in importance in the city's cultural history, the literature of religious suffering and martyrdom made Carthage a central scene of the persecutions and trials of the Christians.⁹

Topic and approach: late antique Carthage as a centre of religious discourses

As was already made clear in ancient literature, and has been confirmed more recently in modern research, Carthage differed from Rome and the cities of northern Italy and Europe north of the Alps, such as Milan and Trier, that became political and cultural centres at least for a time. It differed through its 'Africanness', the specific identity of Carthage, which arose, on the one hand, from the city's Punic past and centuries of hereditary enmity with Rome, its location at the edge of empire and its multicultural and ethnically mixed population but, on the other hand, through its position as a centre promoted by Rome, all of which gave the city a distinctive character and prominence.¹⁰ This remained true even in the globalised world of the high empire and late antiquity.

Here, I want to pick out an aspect that was evidently of essential significance for the construction of a new identity for the old city, namely the engagement with the different religions or religious traditions and authorities.¹¹ Carthage's role as a cultural and religious melting pot forms the background also for the appearance and activity of three of the most prominent authors of Christian late antiquity:¹² Tertullian, the highly educated son of an official, was the first to give early Christian theological discussion a prominent place in Latin literature and a systematic place in the educational landscape, which had until then been primarily pagan in character. The rhetorically brilliant, pugnacious bishop and martyr Cyprian left his mark in Carthage in both writing and buildings and became a symbolic figure for North African Christians. As student and professor, Augustine was for almost a decade a member of Carthage's Manichaean community

and later, as ‘orthodox’ Bishop of Hippo, regularly took part in councils and religious discussions there; he often preached in Carthage’s churches and documented this in the transcripts of the *sermones*, which were later published, and in his letters. The late antique literature of Carthage thus comes predominantly from the hand of Christian theologians, and the picture of the city evoked in the texts turns it into a centre of the religious and theological debates in Latin North Africa.

By analysing some of these discourses situated in late antique Carthage, I wish to investigate the strategies by which the author, rhetor and preacher Augustine tries to expose, reinforce or himself construct these differences and specific features of religious identity.

Young Augustine in Carthage: *Confessions* 3–5

The first question we need to ask, however, is how we should imagine the environment in which Augustine lived in Carthage, or, rather, how he models it in his texts. Here I am not interested in the value of the texts as ‘sources’ for the representation and reconstruction of specific places, topographies or buildings; instead, conversely, the reference to historical ‘reality’ (where this can be reconstructed at all) is significant for the question of how and to what end Carthage’s history, and so also its cultural, religious and political identity, is constructed in texts. The focus lies thus on the function of the textually produced urban setting, in each text’s original context of production.¹³

The text that best stages Carthage as the scene of religious discourses is the autobiographical Books 3–5 of the *Confessions*, in which the writing author and Bishop of Hippo makes himself appear in the city first as a student and then as professor of rhetoric. The two Carthage narratives encompass more than a decade of narrated time (from AD 370 to 383).

A play on words characterises the city negatively right at the start: hardly had the 16-year-old youth ‘Augustinus’ arrived in Carthage (*veni Carthaginem*) as he was surrounded by a *sartago*, a ‘frying pan’, full of passion (*conf.* 3.1). As a student – according to the account in the *Confessions* – he is part of a circle of friends with whom he ‘enjoys life’, in the theatre and in sexual adventures (3.1–3.5). In his instruction in rhetoric he reads Cicero’s *Hortensius*, ‘converts’ to philosophy (3.7–3.9) and turns to the religious sect of the Manichaeans (3.8–4.1). As the son of a Christian mother, the young student still often attends church services, though he also uses the church as a site for erotic rendezvous (3.5).

The figure of the professor of rhetoric, which was the position of ‘Augustinus’ in Carthage – in historical reality in the years AD 375–383 – is cast in the *Confessions* as an entirely typical intellectual: he

reads a wide range of books and himself writes a work on the essence of beauty and the nature of 'evil' (*De pulchro et apto*), which he discusses with friends (4.13–4.27); he reads Aristotle's *Categories* in order to comprehend God's 'greatness and beauty' (4.28–4.29) and teaches himself the *artes liberales* (4.30).¹⁴ In the meantime he has begun to have doubts about the Manichaean theology; the doctrines on God and the cosmos as presented by natural philosophy and pagan astronomy and astrology seem to him 'more plausible' than the Manichaean myths (5.3–5.13). This experience of intellectual disappointment introduces the end of the autobiographical narrative set in Carthage. The following narrative sequences relate the time spent in Rome and Milan, where the professor of rhetoric is baptised by the Bishop Ambrose; *Confessions* 9 ends with the protagonist's return to Africa.

In Augustine's *Bildungsroman*, Carthage thus appears as the cultural metropolis that it really was in North Africa of the fourth century AD, but from the perspective of the first-person narrator, who shows himself acting on the urban stage as a still inexperienced and intellectually curious youth. In this narrative sequence Carthage is not just the 'den of iniquity' but also a space for philosophical, literary and theological discourses within which the young 'Augustinus' moves.

Back in Carthage: the struggle against 'unbelievers'

Even the original (late antique) readership of the Carthage books of the *Confessions*¹⁵ will have known that the 'hero' of the autobiographical narrative had long ago returned to Africa and was now often present again in the place he describes in Books 3–5 as a *sartago* and the scene of his 'errant confusions' – but now he held a different role and function, namely that of a disputatious bishop. He was 'disputatious' in the sense that from the start of his clerical career as priest (from 391) and then even more so as Bishop of Hippo (from 396) he began to engage in disputes with those who supported other theological positions and religious groups which did not confess the 'true faith' of the state church, that is, Nicene Christianity. These included the pagans, the Manichaeans, the Donatists, the so-called Arians and the Pelagians.¹⁶ The fact that Augustine soon took on a leading role in councils and religious discussions in western North Africa should clearly be ascribed to his education and professional experience as a rhetor, which put him in a position to parry his opponents' arguments and develop counterarguments, in disputes conducted both in public and in writing. Over the course of these debates, in 392, in Hippo, he took the stage before an assembled audience against the Manichaean Fortunatus, an old acquaintance

from his years in Carthage, whom he so cornered with all the resources of dialectic and eristic that Fortunatus left the city.¹⁷ Even years later, Julian of Aeclanum still called him the ‘Punic Aristotle’.¹⁸

The Bishop Augustine called his autobiography ‘confessions’ not least because his past as a professor of rhetoric, as an intellectual and as a member for many years of the Manichaean sect in Carthage was known and was cast up against him when he was made bishop.¹⁹ The staging of Carthage as a *sartago* should also be understood as a foil against which the bishop who is writing the *Confessions* wants to contrast himself, but which is also meant to be perceived as a reality and so as a potential danger: this centre of intellectuals, sects and astrologers, Carthage, the ‘den of iniquity’, tempts and seduces the people who live in it.

Against the backdrop that Augustine paints for Carthage in the *Confessions*, I would now like to read a series of passages from two sermons that he delivered in Carthage (*sermo* 62 in AD 399 and *sermo* 24 in AD 401) – and so shortly before or after he had completed the *Confessions* and published them as a whole.²⁰ Later, Augustine will again work with the same backdrop of the lively but problematic metropolis, especially in *De civitate dei*, where he not only evokes the old picture of Punic Carthage as enemy and the *topos* of decadence that was linked to it²¹ but also describes the activity in the theatres and in the city’s public squares and temples, decked with statues of the gods, as he had seen them as a young man.²² This backdrop must still have been current for the public who heard his early sermons in Carthage, as is revealed by a series of laws and measures through which the imperial court in Ravenna tried to complete the destruction of the pagan temples and divine images, as had been decreed already by Theodosius but had not been successfully carried out in Africa. On the 19th of March AD 399, two *comites imperatoris*, Gaudentius and Iovius, came to Carthage and, by decree of Honorius, ordered the destruction of temples and removal of statues of the pagan gods.²³ Further measures followed.²⁴

It seems we should picture the public areas and buildings of the North African cities at the end of the fourth century as still furnished with numerous pagan ‘props’. In this the urban landscape of Carthage seems to have differed significantly from that of Rome, which had been systematically Christianised, not just through the symbolic act of removing the Altar of Victory from the Curia but also through Bishop Damasus’ programme of inscriptions.²⁵ Carthage’s topography had certainly been shaped in a Christian way by a number of basilicas and memorial buildings to commemorate Cyprian, the city’s great martyr.²⁶ But in Carthage, as in other North African cities, it seems that it was much more common for Christian and pagan buildings and

statues to stand side by side, also in prominent places.²⁷ This situation was now to be ended by the removal of the images ordered by Honorius.

The two *sermones* 62 and 24 are usually cited to document the iconoclasm of 399 and 401 in North Africa or the history of the struggle between late antique Christians with paganism in general.²⁸ In what follows, however, my interest is not in the reconstruction of historical facts but in the arguments and rhetorical strategies by which the preacher Augustine comments on and tries to direct the situation in Carthage and the mood of the community in each case.

A sermon on the city's foundation festival

On a Sunday in AD 399, when Augustine was preaching in Carthage (*serm.* 62), the city was celebrating, as it did every year, the Foundation Festival of the *Colonia Concordia Iulia Carthago*.²⁹ As was evidently normal practice when such events overlapped with a church service, the participants in the festival also came to the service and behaved in a boisterous, festive fashion inside the church.³⁰

Augustine seems to have adapted to the situation, or at least he moves over the course of his sermon to the exegesis of 1 Cor. 8:10, Paul's warning that one who has 'knowledge' (*scientiam*) should not take part in a sacrificial feast 'in the idol's temple' as he will mislead the weak into eating meat sacrificed to idols (i.e. to become *idolothytes*). As becomes clear in what follows, the public banquets of the city festival took place in the sacred area of the *Genius loci*, where, according to Augustine, an image of the god and an altar still stood (§10).³¹ The act of eating thus became a cult act, Augustine claimed, and Christians in this way became an obstacle – became 'stones in the road' – in the process of converting the pagans (§9).³² The influence and effect of 'bad dinner parties' (*mensae malae*) are illustrated with the quotation from 1 Cor. 15:33: 'Bad company corrupts good morals' (*corrumpunt mores bonos colloquia mala*). At this point the sermon reads like a commentary on the autobiographical narrative of *Confessions* 3–5, in which Carthage is presented as a 'frying pan' (*sartago*) full of passions.

Augustine then supposes an interlocutor objecting that the *genium*³³ *Carthaginis* is not a god (*non est, inquit, deus, quia genium est Carthaginis*) and that the charge of blasphemy would thus be invalid: the 'city god'³⁴ could evidently be understood as a mere symbol (hence the neuter form?) which represents the history of the city whose birthday is being celebrated. To this interjection Augustine replies that 'it' (the *genium*) indeed is just a stone, but because of the presence of the altar the statue is treated as a divine being – a *daemonium* – and so would *count* as such (§10). The bishop thereupon

calls his hearers to ‘desert’ the festivities (§11: *deserite sollemnitates*) and, with reference to Deut 7:5, calls for a ‘breaking of the images’, as he had evidently done once before, in a sermon at the church of the Mappalia (§17).³⁵ However, this iconoclasm should occur ‘in the heart’ of the pagans (*prius enim agimus, ut idola in eorum corde frangamus*) for ‘everything must be ‘interior’ (*totum intus esse debeat*).³⁶ Finally Augustine repeats his call to non-violent action against the *idola*: he himself is a ‘persecutor’ but through ‘confession’ (*profitemur*), that is, with his words (§18):

fratres, ecce quid displicet paganis. parum est illis quia de villis ipsorum non illa tollimus, non illa frangimus: et in nostris volunt ea servari. contra idola praedicamus, de cordibus illa tollimus: sumus persecutores idolorum: profitemur.

Brothers, that’s all it is that is annoying the pagans. It’s not enough for them that we don’t remove the things from their country houses, that we don’t go and smash them there; they want them preserved even in our places. We preach against idols, we remove them from people’s hearts, we are persecutors of idols, we confess.³⁷

Augustine commits to behaviour guided by reason and advises the non-violent removal of the pagan images in, as it were, an interior clearing out of old belongings and habits.³⁸ The rhetoric of the sermon thus, on the one hand, pursues the pragmatic aim of combating the practice of the cult meal,³⁹ but, on the other hand, it propagates a religiosity that can be termed a dispositional ethics or ‘ethics of conviction’: it makes it possible to leave alone the material remnants of pagan cults, so long as they are not put to certain uses. However, it is clear that this tolerance has further consequences: even if the statue of the *Genius Carthaginis* is left in place, according to Augustine’s directive no more celebrations may take place there any longer.⁴⁰ The city was, after all, founded and exorcised under Octavian according to the laws of the old religion, so the foundation festival is pagan and, if Augustine’s argumentation is pursued to its ultimate consequence, cannot be undertaken any more.⁴¹

Hercules shaved

After further imperial decrees against pagan cults in 399 there was repeated unrest, some of it violent, in the cities of North Africa.⁴² In Carthage the passivity of the clergy, especially that of the Bishop Aurelius, evidently provoked anger among the populace, which demanded a tougher approach to pagan temples and statues.⁴³ This anti-pagan mood forms the rhetorical setting of a sermon that Augustine delivered in Carthage on the evening of 16 June AD 401

(*serm.* 24).⁴⁴ On this Sunday the bishops had been consulting over an edict that demanded further measures against the pagan images.⁴⁵ In the sermon, after the council, Augustine praised the members of the community who, obeying the admonishments of their Bishop Aurelius, had reined in their *sanctus zelus*, for they had merely scratched off the gilded beard of a statue of Hercules that stood at a prominent site in the city and had been renovated shortly before (§5).⁴⁶ However, the mood in Carthage was evidently such that further disorders were to be feared, or at least Augustine refers to a call for a tougher approach, as had already taken place in Rome.⁴⁷ Augustine's counterargument starts at this point (§6):

cogitate, fratres, advertite in libris ipsis gentium, audite ab eis, in quibus ipsius infelicitatis reliquiae remanserunt, vel audiendo vel legendo cognoscite litteras eorum, et videte quia illi ipsi dii Romani vocantur. ergo isti dii vocantur Romani. et quando christiani cogebantur, fremente impetu paganorum, ut eos adorarent, et recusantes eorum saevitiam usque ad effusionem sanguinis sustinebant. ea videbatur tota culpa martyrum quorum fundebatur sanguis, quia deos Romanos adorare nolebant, quia ceremonias Romanas respuebant, quia diis Romanis non supplicabant. et totus impetus, tota invidia non fiebat, nisi de nomine deorum Romanorum.

si ergo dii Romani Romae defecerunt, hic quare remanserunt? hoc ergo, fratres, hoc attendite, hoc dixi, hoc inhibete. dii Romani, dii Romani, si ergo, inquam, dii Romani Romae defecerunt, hic quare remanserunt? si ambulare possent, dicerent quia huc inde fugerunt. sed non fugerunt. remanserunt ibi, Romae? qui aliquando dictus est deus Hercules, Romae iam non est. hic autem etiam barba inaurata esse voluit. quando iam ibi⁴⁸ non est, hic etiam deaurata barba esse voluit.

erravi plane, quia dixi, esse voluit. quid enim vult insensatus lapis?

Consider, brothers, mark it in the very books of the gentiles, hear it from those who still retain some traces of this unhappy condition, take note by hearing or reading of their own writings, and see that these very gods are called *Roman*. So these gods of theirs are called *Roman* gods. And when Christians were being compelled to worship them by the ferocious onslaught of the pagans, and, when they refused to, had to endure their savagery to the shedding of their blood, the sum total of the crime committed by the martyrs whose blood was being shed seems to have been that they would not worship the *Roman* gods, that they were contemptuously refusing to perform *Roman* ceremonies, that they would not pray to *Roman* gods. The whole force of all this ill-will, these onslaughts, lay in the name of the *Roman* gods.

So if the *Roman* gods have disappeared from *Rome*, why do they

still remain here? This then, brothers, this is what you must look to, this is what I have been saying, this you must put a stop to. *Roman* gods, *Roman* gods – so if, I say, the *Roman* gods have disappeared from *Rome*, why should they stay here? If they could walk, they would say they had fled here from there. But they didn't flee. Have they remained there, at *Rome*? Hercules who was once called a god is no longer to be found at *Rome*. Here, however, he wanted to have his beard gilded. You won't find him there – here he even wanted his beard gilded.

I was wrong, of course, saying that he wanted it. What can an inanimate lump of stone want.⁴⁹

The gods are 'Roman', as Augustine makes clear with a cluster of repetitions, and through the reference to pagan literature (*in libris ipsis gentium*) the gods become merely figures in the mythology of Rome – 'bookish gods', so to say.⁵⁰ He thus sets the gods in a tradition that is not genuinely Carthaginian. By stressing further that the 'Christians' who did not want to pray to the 'Roman gods' or take part in 'Roman cult celebrations' became martyrs, he also creates an opposition between *Romani* and *christiani*. And if the 'Roman gods', Hercules among them, are no longer in Rome, why would they have remained 'here' in Christian Carthage? They cannot have fled here, as they cannot 'walk'; like the bearded Hercules, they are made of insensible stone (*insensatus lapis*). If they have been removed in Rome, then they do not need to be removed here, because they are 'Roman'. The shaving of the gold beard, which the pagans had wanted as a distinction for the god in Carthage,⁵¹ is interpreted by Augustine as a symbolic act by which the 'breaking of the images' has now been completed.

According to Augustine, the images of the 'Roman gods' are foreign to Carthage and are thus unimportant and easy to dismantle. Augustine tries to make use of the Carthaginian community's efforts to draw level with Rome by stressing the differences that allow Carthage to behave in a way that is independent of behaviour in Rome. He seems here to be playing on the old rivalry between the two cities, which plays a far larger role in the literature he cites than does the Roman colonisation and refoundation. The problem of 'this city' is, as Augustine states clearly at the start of the passage, instead the *superstitiones daemonum* (§6): he strengthens his audience in their 'will' to act against the 'superstition' of the pagans and against belief in demons (the *paganorum et gentilium superstitio* or *superstitiones daemonum*), as this is also God's 'will', 'command' and 'prophecy' (*deus vult, deus iussit, deus praedixit*).⁵² When he further says that God's will has prevailed in large parts of the world, he seems to be confirming

the community in their view that the clergy would not get tough with the pagans; however, he now appeals to their will ‘to begin in this city’ (*si voluntas vestra ab hac civitate inciperet*). As becomes clear from what follows, however, it is not the statues of the ‘Roman’ gods that his audience should ‘destroy’ (*delere, abolere*) but the *superstitio* itself,⁵³ that is, thoughts and attitudes – it is this act that demands from them a great effort (*arduus labor*). Again, Augustine calls not for brute force but for more far-reaching consequences.

A rhetoric of theology for Carthage?

Augustine thus consistently transfers the ‘principle of interiority’⁵⁴ developed in the philosophical dialogues, the *Confessions* and the theological treatises also into his argumentation in disputes with non-Christian religious groups or with the behaviour of Christian communities towards those of different beliefs. This rhetoric directed at a broad public and an unusual situation makes clear in exemplary fashion that Augustine regards the material manifestation of a religion as inessential or even as theologically irrelevant. He reveals this attitude also in other contexts where concrete objects and buildings are concerned – indeed he has often been accused of a lack of interest in the built substance of urban spaces, especially Rome and Milan,⁵⁵ and in fact we learn little from his works about material structures or the locations or aesthetic qualities of pagan sanctuaries and divine images. In the sermons in which Augustine addresses the topic of the Gothic sack of 410 and the catastrophic situation in Rome, he consistently devalues the earthly existence of *Roma aeterna* in comparison to the eternity of the existence that awaits in the hereafter. These ideas come together in the *City of God* as a theology of history that creates a categorical distinction between the existence of the *terrena civitas* and that of the *civitas caelestis*.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, we can see that Augustine does indeed take account of the local identities and topographical idiosyncrasies of a city in his textually conducted dispute with heterodox positions and religions, as is apparent even from the differentiation among the geographically disparate settings of the *Confessions*: in the autobiographical narrative the three cities Carthage, Rome and Milan are each ascribed specific historical personalities and events and are linked to the decisive religious experiences of the protagonists, even when no concrete places or spaces are named.⁵⁷ In the two sermons discussed here, *sermones* 62 and 24, Augustine works with the elements of the historical Carthage’s cultural identity. This creates a dialectic between the historical specificity and particular cultural conditions of a given city, on the one hand, and his stress on the unimportance of material substance, on the other hand.

There is further evidence of Augustine's awareness of the special character of the metropolis Carthage in a sermon that he delivered on the journey back from Carthage in summer 399 in the North African town of Bulla Regia, where he accuses the community of attending the games and non-Christian celebrations (*serm. Denis 17.7*):⁵⁸

sed forte dicitis: nos Carthagini similes sumus. quomodo apud Carthaginem est plebs sancta et religiosa, sic tanta turba est in magna civitate, ut se excusent omnes de aliis. pagani faciunt, Iudaei faciunt, potest dici Carthagine; hic, quicumque faciunt, christiani faciunt.

But perhaps you will say, 'We are like Carthage.' Just as there is a holy and religious community in Carthage, so also there is such a vast population in a great metropolis, that they all use others to excuse themselves by. In Carthage, you can say, 'The pagans do it, the Jews do it'; here, whoever is doing it, Christians are doing it.⁵⁹

The same behaviour that Augustine objects to in the small town he is prepared to allow to the cultural and religious melting pot of Carthage – in a kind of situational tolerance. Carthage, rebuilt and equipped with pagan cults on a Roman model in the Augustan period, is treated as a special case: the Bishop Augustine's activity there is merely as a visiting preacher, but he knows the city well from his student years and from his own professional experiences, and he shows that he is prepared to accept the simultaneous presence there of Christian, pagan and Jewish religions. The status of late antique Carthage as an educational centre and a flashpoint for religious and philosophical debates had evidently preserved, or even promoted, this religious plurality, as is also made clear by Augustine's autobiographical experience, which is dramatised in the *Confessions*. In his speech the bishop acknowledges the paradox that, in the intellectual space that has come into being through the high density of educational institutions and intellectual discourses, Carthage cannot be 'brought into line' and homogenised by the similarly high density of ecclesiastical buildings.

However, the sense for local differences which Augustine displays in the sermon to the Christian community of Bulla Regia cannot obscure the fact that, following Augustine's argument in *sermones* 62 and 24, the ban on non-Christian festivals must ultimately be enforced everywhere. A Christian community's local or national character and education do not allow a specific form of religious cult and ritual. Tolerance towards the multicultural structures of a city and its people can extend only as far as material visibility, if the confession of 'true doctrine' is required. Augustine's iconoclasm serves, in his rhetoric of theology, only as a starting point for his plea to inner conviction and

Notes

- 1 See Ceașescu (1976).
- 2 Cf. Rakob (1991/1997/1999), Rakob (2000), Wightman (1980), Gros (2000) and Dolenz and Flügel (2012).
- 3 Vergil's *Aeneid*, too, can be read against the background of the contemporary refoundation of Carthage. See Harrison (1984), Rives (1995) and Miles (2003).
- 4 Thus Miles (2003).
- 5 See Zanker (2009/1988, 311–312, 315–316). Cf. also Brent (2010, 29–40).
- 6 The best example for this is the cult of Astarte-Tanit, Romanised as Iuno Caelestis (cf. n. 22). See Rives (1995, 67–71), Lepelley (1996–2002) and Ben Abdallah and Ennabli (1998).
- 7 Cf. Elliger (2004, 237–239).
- 8 In the *Florida* Apuleius stages the city as a citadel of Roman culture (*flor.* 20.9–20.10; cf. *flor.* 18), and later, Ausonius gives it a place of honour in his catalogue of praised cities (Auson. 286 [= *ord. urb.*], 8–13). On this see Rives (1995, 27–28) and Miles (2003, 137). On Carthage's significance as an educational centre, cf. Elliger (2004, 245–246) and Lancel (1986–1994, 759–760).
- 9 On the dates (180: *Acta Scillitanorum*, 203: *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, 258: execution of Cyprian), see Lancel (1986–1994) and Elliger (2004, 252–260).
- 10 Cf. especially Rives (1995), Brent (2010) and the study of Lepelley (2001). On the linguistic concept of *Africitas* see Mattiacci (2014), but cf. also Vössing (2003, 160), who maintains the position that 'il n'y avait ... pas de place pour une *africitas* substantielle dans la sphère des personnes cultivées'.
- 11 Following Rives (1995, 15) I take the term 'religious' very broadly as encompassing 'all those activities and ideas that deal with gods, daemons, or other supernatural beings'.
- 12 Cf. Rives (1995, 273–310), on Cyprian most recently Brent (2010).
- 13 On such literary strategies of 'cityscaping' cf. Jenkyns (2013) and most recently, taking into account late antique urban spaces and texts, Fuhrer, Mundt and Stenger (2015, 1–18).
- 14 As teacher of rhetoric in Thagaste the narrated 'Augustinus' took an interest especially in astrology (*conf.* 4.3–4.6). Prior to an appearance in the theatre as part of a public contest, a *haruspex* offered him his services to influence the result in his favour – which 'Augustinus' declines, as he does not want to make an animal sacrifice, that is, he does not want to have an animal killed (4.3).
- 15 Cf. *retract.* 2.6.1; *persev.* 53; *conf.* 10.3–10.6.
- 16 See Humfress (2012).
- 17 Cf. Possid. *Vita* 6. See Fuhrer (2012b, 280).
- 18 In Aug. c. *Iul. imp.* 3.199: *Aristoteles Poenorum*.
- 19 See Fuhrer (2008).
- 20 The composition and publication of the *Confessions* can be dated to 397–401; cf. Feldmann (1986–1994, 1184).
- 21 In most detail in *civ.* 18.54; cf. 3.21.
- 22 *Civ.* 2.4 and 2.26: *ubi et quando sacrati Caelestis audiebant castitatis praecepta, nescimus; ante ipsum tamen delubrum, ubi simulacrum illud locatum conspiciabamus, universi undique confluentes et ubi quisque poterat stantes ludos qui agebantur intentissime spectabamus, intuentes alternante conspectu hinc meretriciam pompam, illinc virginem deam; illam suppliciter adorari, ante illam turpia celebrari; non ibi*

- puḍibundos mimos, nullam verecundioŕem scaenicam vidimus; cuncta obscenitatis implebantur officia. sciebatur virginali numini quid placeret, et exhibebatur quod de templo domum matrona doctior reportaret* ('We do not know where and when those votaries of Caelestis listened to admonitions on chastity. But in front of the very shrine where her statue was placed for us to gaze upon, we all used to assemble from every side. We would occupy there whatever vantage-point we could, and pay closest attention to the shows which were mounted. Our gaze would switch now one way to where the harlots were processing, and now the other to the maiden goddess. We would witness her receiving suppliant adoration, and then watch disgusting rites enacted before her. We did not witness any decorous mimes there, nor any actress disporting herself more modestly; all demands of obscenity were met. We were made aware what the virginal goddess required. The show presented there made the matron more knowledgeable as she returned home from the temple'; transl. Walsh 2005, 169). On Augustine's knowledge of the cult of the Dea Caelestis cf. Ben Abdallah and Ennabli (1998). See also n. 6.
- 23 *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.15. Augustine recalls this in *civ.* 18.54: *templa everterunt et simulacra fregerunt*. On this see Lancel (1999, 430–431) and Shaw (2011, 226–228).
- 24 See p. 76 with n. 45.
- 25 See Fuhrer (2013a).
- 26 See Lancel (1986–1994) and Elliger (2004, 269–282).
- 27 See Rives (1995, especially 245–249) and Brent (2010, especially 40–75).
- 28 Cf., for example, Markus (1990, 115–117), Magalhães de Oliveira (2006, *passim*) and Shaw (2011, 229–235).
- 29 *Aug. serm.* 62, ed. Verbraken *et al.* (2008, 292–294). In favour of dating the sermon to the occasion in March, cf. Lepelley (2001, 49, n. 48), contra Perler and Maier (1969, 225–228: April). September 399 is proposed by Chadwick (1985, 11), followed by Shaw (2011, 229), as the date of the sermon, which presupposes the decree *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.18 (*De idolis deponendis*; see n. 45). The fact that Augustine was in Carthage might be seen in connection with the imperial decree. The date of the festival is not known; cf. Verbraken *et al.* (2008, 294).
- 30 See van der Meer (1951, 530–542) and MacMullen (1981, 34–42, 160–165).
- 31 In 1992 on the Byrsa, an exedra with a marble bust – a male figure with long hair and tracks to fix a castellated crown – was excavated, which has been identified as the *Genius Carthagini*; according to Lepelley (2001, 53) this is the site at which the banquet took place to which Augustine refers in *serm.* 62.
- 32 §9: *paganos reliquos colligi volumus, lapides estis in via; venire volentes offendunt, et redeunt. dicunt enim in cordibus suis: quare nos relinquamus deos, quos christiani ipsi nobiscum colunt?* ('We want the rest of the pagans to be brought in, you are rocks in the road; those wishing to come stumble over them, and go back. They say to themselves, you see, "Why should we abandon the gods, whom Christians themselves worship together with us?"; transl. Hill 1991, 161).
- 33 The neuter form is only attested in late authors, according to ThLL 6.2 (1827, 5–10), in the grammarian Charisius and in glossaries.
- 34 This is usually a statue or bust of a male figure with a castellated crown; according to Claude Lepelley it is evidently the bust which has been excavated on the Byrsa hill; cf. n. 31.
- 35 §17: *Audistis quae vobis legimus, omnes qui nuper in Mappalibus adfuistis. cum data vobis fuerit terra in potestatem* [Deut. 7:1] – *prius ait, in potestatem* [Deut. 7:1], *et sic dixit quae facienda sunt – aras eorum, inquit, destruetis, lucos eorum comminuetis, et omnes titulos eorum confringetis* [Deut. 7:5]. *cum acceperitis potestatem, hoc facite* ('All of you who were present at Mappalia the other day heard the text I had read

- to you there: *When the land is given over to your lawful power* – he first said to *your lawful power*, and so only then went on to say what was to be done – *you shall pull down their altars*, he said, *cut down their groves, and break in pieces all their signs*. When you have received lawful authority, do all this'; transl. Hill 1991, 156) – The Church at the Mappalia is the memorial building (the burial church) for Cyprian. On this see Perler and Maier (1969, 225).
- 36 Hill (1991, 165) translates, 'The whole of you ought to be here inside the church', which is certainly wrong.
- 37 The translation is from Hill (1991, 165), except for *profitemur* (Hill: 'we don't deny it').
- 38 The phrase *persecutores sumus idolorum* is not, as Perler and Maier (1969, 226) think, a reference to persecutions that have already occurred; cf. Markus (1990, 112–113).
- 39 Cf. Markus (1990, 113): 'Augustine's sermon is a masterpiece of crowd management'.
- 40 At the end of the sermon Augustine leaves open the possibility of further measures (§18 fin.): *numquid servatores? non facio ubi non possum; non facio ubi conqueritur dominus rei: ubi autem vult fieri, et gratias agit; reus ero, si non fecero* ('Are we supposed to be their preservers? I don't do this sort of thing where I have no authority to; I don't do it where the owner of the property objects. But where he wants it done, and is grateful for it, I would be guilty if I didn't do it'; transl. Hill 1991, 166).
- 41 We have no other attestations of the Carthaginian city festival, but we also hear nothing of any ban on it. On this see Lepelley (2001, 39–53); it is not possible to reconstruct whether the dismantling that made possible the discovery mentioned in n. 31 derives from the measures introduced by Honorius and attended by Augustine.
- 42 On this see Markus (1990, 117), Magalhães de Oliveira (2006, 245–246) and Shaw (2011, 226–228).
- 43 On this see Magalhães de Oliveira (2006, 246) and Shaw (2011, 228–230).
- 44 Ed. Lambot (1961, 324–325).
- 45 *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.18 (*De idolis deponendis*), issued in August 399; cf. Hill (1990, 78–79). Cf. also n. 29.
- 46 The action thus preceded the sermon, and so Augustine did not incite the congregation to an attack on the images, as Brown (1963, 288) and MacMullen (1984, 95) think (cf. van der Meer 1951, 65–66); on this see Magalhães de Oliveira (2006, 247 with n. 12 and 13). Lambot (1961, 330) assumes that the sermon was interrupted by the congregation at the end of §4 and that there was hence a spontaneous change in Augustine's argumentation. An iconoclastic attack on a statue of Hercules in the town of Sufes in 399 resulted in 60 Christian fatalities (cf. Aug. *ep.* 50). On this see Lancel (1999, 432–433) and Malherbe (1988, 573).
- 47 §6: *utique hoc clamastis: quomodo Roma, sic et Carthago. si in capite gentium res praecessit, membra non sunt secutura?* ('That's what you have been shouting, isn't it – "Like Rome, like Carthage"? If the business has gone ahead in the head of the nations, are the members not to follow?'; transl. Hill 1990, 76).
- 48 *Tibi* (p. 332,189 Lambot) is clearly a typographic error; the error is silently corrected by Magalhães de Oliveira (2006, 250).
- 49 Transl. Hill (1990, 76–77).
- 50 A knowledge of Roman literature in Carthage can be assumed not only among the educated elite, as its stories were also present on the stage – in recitations, mime and pantomime. On this see Magalhães de Oliveira (2006, 249–250).

- However, it is evident that Augustine assumed a higher level of education and knowledge in Carthage than in other towns, as made clear by a remark in *serm.* 150.3: *qui sint vel fuerint philosophi Epicurei et Stoici, id est quid senserint, quid verum esse putaverint, quid philosophando sectati sint, procul dubio multi vestrum nesciunt; sed quoniam Carthagini loquimur, multi sciunt. audiunt ergo modo nos dicturos vobis: ad rem quippe valde pertinet quod puto esse dicendum* ('Who are or were the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, that is what their ideas were, what they thought to be true, what goal they pursued in their philosophising, many of you undoubtedly don't know; but because I am speaking in Carthage, many do. So they must now help me in what I am going to say to you. What I think has to be said is very much to the point').
- 51 According to Magalhães de Oliveira (2006, 250–253) they might have got the support of the new Proconsul of the Province Africa in 401/402, who may be identified with Helpidius, a pagan and friend of Symmachus.
- 52 *Serm.* 24.6: *numquid dicimus: nolite quod vultis? immo etiam gratias agamus id vos velle quod deus vult. ut enim omnis paganorum et gentilium superstitio deleatur, deus vult, deus iussit, deus praedixit, deus implere iam coepit, et in multis iam terrarum locis etiam ex magna parte complevit. si voluntas vestra ab hac civitate inciperet, ut hic primitus aboleri superstitiones daemonum quaereretis, fortassis aliquis arduus labor esset, non tamen desperandus* ('Am I saying "Stop wanting what you want"? On the contrary, we must be thankful that you want what God wants. That every superstition of the pagans and the gentiles should be abolished is what God wants, God has ordered, God has foretold, God has begun to bring about, and in many parts of the world has already in great measure achieved. If your will in the matter was beginning from this city, so that you were seeking to get the superstitious worship of demons abolished here first of all, it would perhaps be a task of some difficulty, though not one to be despaired of'; transl. Hill 1990, 76).
- 53 Among these he still also included the Manichaeans, whom he accuses in the *Confessions* of entirely inventing their gods, whereas the pagan gods at least may have an allegorical meaning (*conf.* 3.10–3.11); cf. *c. Faust.* 20.9: *proinde vos paganis istis, qui vulgo noti sunt et antiquitus fuerunt et in reliquiis suis iam nunc erubescunt, prorsus deteriores estis, quod illi colunt ea, quae dii non sunt, vos autem, omnino quae non sunt* ('Hence, you are certainly worse than those pagans who are well known, who are of ancient stock, and who – the few of them that are left – are now ashamed. For they worship things that are not gods, but you worship things that do not exist at all'). On this see Fuhrer (2013b).
- 54 Augustine ranks as the 'inventor of interiority', on which cf. Seele (2008, 216).
- 55 So Paschoud (1967) and Maier (1955, ch. IV).
- 56 On the correlation between Augustine's 'lack of interest' in the material structures of built cities and his theology of history see Piccaluga (1995, 507–508) and Fuhrer (2013a, 61–62, 70–71).
- 57 See Fuhrer (2012a).
- 58 See Markus (1990, 115–116).
- 59 Transl. Hill (1994, 296).
- 60 I would like to thank Orla Mulholland for translating this article from German.

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Jerome, Quintilian and Little Paula

Asceticism, education and ideology

Christa Gray

In the earliest years of the fifth century Jerome sent a letter to Rome from Bethlehem to answer the request of a Christian Roman lady, Laeta, for advice on bringing up her infant daughter Paula to be a virgin dedicated to God. This text survived into and beyond the Middle Ages and was read and, presumably, followed by generations of Christians. From the twentieth century onwards, the assessment of the letter's merits, both as a 'pedagogic manual'¹ and in terms of its attitude towards children (and girls in particular), has become increasingly critical,² although positive comments can still be found.³ In the present contribution I propose to think again about the letter's original intentions and the possible effects on its audience. In doing so I follow Andrew Cain's groundbreaking work on Jerome's letters. Cain has analysed the strategy according to which Jerome composed, collected and published his letters in order to promote his scholarship and his ascetic authority.⁴ This was an essential exercise to attract patrons who would fund not only his translation of most of the Old Testament from the Hebrew and Aramaic into Latin and his biblical commentaries but also the maintenance of a monastery founded at Bethlehem in the 380s. Unfortunately, Cain has so far said little about Letter 107 in particular; but my argument in what follows harmonises well with Cain's overall conclusions that the letters were intended to be read widely to increase Jerome's profile and income.

In order to pursue my argument I shall investigate, first, the rhetorical frame in which Jerome situates his instructions. The significance of the first two sections of the letter, which deal with the Christianisation of Laeta's family and the entire Roman Empire, is sometimes overlooked or minimised in scholarly literature. I then follow on to discuss the function of Jerome's juxtaposition of classical, 'pagan', advice for bringing up children, exemplified by his use of the first-century *Institutio Oratoria* by the rhetorician Quintilian, with the ascetic constraints which he places on Little Paula from an early age. I

argue that both Quintilianic education and strict Christian asceticism are presented as methods for forming an elite human being. By combining the two Jerome strives to present himself as a radical yet traditionalist provider of pre-eminent status for Roman aristocrats. He claims to provide the solution to the problem of how to live in the early fifth-century world, a world which was in the process of undergoing fundamental and unsettling transformations, as Jerome makes clear. It will become apparent that his instructions for adapting to this change have close conceptual links with the spatial environment as Jerome advocates removing Paula from the city of Rome, depicted as pagan, degenerate and crumbling, to the rural Eastern margins of the empire.

Paula's family background

Little Paula was by no means an ordinary child. On her father's side, she claimed descent from the Gracchi and Scipios.⁵ Her paternal grandmother, also named Paula, had been involved in a degree of scandal when, in her widowhood, she and her daughters had come under Jerome's moral and ascetic influence. This influence was widely believed to have contributed to the death of Paula's older daughter, Blesilla, as a result of excessive fasting and mortification.⁶ Yet Paula finally accompanied him to Bethlehem with her other daughter, Julia Eustochium, after Jerome was forced to leave Rome in AD 385.⁷ Besides her noble ancestry, Little Paula was also remarkable for the circumstances of her birth: after what appears to have been a series of miscarriages, her mother had vowed that her firstborn child would be dedicated to God, that is, to a life of virginal Christian devotion.⁸ Although we know of parallels for child-dedication, this was still an unusual step for an aristocratic Roman mother to take.⁹ Jerome expands on this situation in *Ep.* 107.3.2–107.3.3 by comparing Paula to the prophet Samuel and to John the Baptist, both of whom owed their conception to special divine intervention and were dedicated to God from childhood. The terrifying extent of Laeta's responsibility for Little Paula's spiritual purity, and thus for her eternal salvation, is again emphasised in *Jer. Ep.* 107.6. Paula's birth and dedication therefore provided a unique opportunity for Jerome to present a vision for forming a Christian virgin from the very beginning of her life. These circumstances explain Jerome's emphasis on guarding her chastity, that is to say, both her physical virginity and her mental innocence. However, the letter does more than merely set out a programme for bringing up Paula.¹⁰

In the opening chapters the letter starts not by talking about education but with a long disquisition about 'mixed marriage' between Christians and non-Christians, introduced by a quotation from Paul's

first letter to the Corinthians:

If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

(Jer. *Ep.* 107.1.1; 1 Cor. 7:13–7:14, NRSVA)¹¹

The status of Little Paula is here determined by that of her parents: as Jerome goes on to explain, Laeta's husband, Toxotius, had not been a Christian when they married, but his conversion followed their wedding. It is Laeta's faith which first defined the 'holy' status of her child. The reason for Jerome's reassurance is given in the following argument: Laeta was herself born of a 'mixed marriage', and, unlike her husband, her father is (still) not a Christian: he is Publilius Caeionius Caecina Albinus, a senator who held the office of *pontifex*, a traditional Roman priesthood.¹² As Jerome presents him, he is one of the notorious 'last pagans of Rome' – a characterisation which many scholars have only recently learned to mistrust in its entirety, and which should therefore be approached first and foremost as a rhetorical device.¹³ Jerome articulates the problem with which he will deal in terms of Christian conversion. This should be borne in mind as we read the rest of the letter. We should also be aware that Jerome's particular ascetic brand of Christianity, influenced by his Eastern environment, differs significantly from that of ordinary Roman Christians, who appear to have been much more conservative in their orientation, trying to combine traditional and Christian values.¹⁴ There is a possibility that Jerome is here introducing a scenario with which other Christians may empathise – how to cope with the fact that a prominent member of one's family is not yet 'saved' – in order to shoehorn into the solution of this problem a much more contentious position, which is the promotion of strict asceticism.

Aristocratic conversion and its significance for the city of Rome

By comparing one comment of the introduction with another in the main body of the letter, we can get a taste of the belligerent mode in which Jerome articulates his desire for Albinus' conversion. In the introduction, Little Paula's arrival is depicted in the following heart-warming scene of a rejoicing family:

Who would ever have thought that the granddaughter of the *pontifex* Albinus would be born in answer to a mother's vow, so that in the presence of her rejoicing grandfather the little girl's still

stammering tongue would resound ‘alleluia’ and that the old man would cherish in his own bosom a virgin of Christ?

(Jer. Ep. 107.1.3)¹⁵

Here Jerome paints a touching picture of the grandfather’s natural love for his grandchild. But he harnesses this emotional scene to a polemical contrast: that between Albinus’ designation as *pontifex*, that is, a ‘pagan’ priest, and the partisan interpretation of the child’s first babyish gurgles as the Christian ‘alleluia’ (‘praise be to God’). This antithesis points to the Christian influence which the child can have over her loving ‘pagan’ grandfather, reversing the traditional pattern in which the adults educate the child.¹⁶

By returning to this scene in the later, ‘instructive’ part of the letter Jerome very clearly suggests that Little Paula should actively use her influence to manipulate Albinus: ‘When she sees her grandfather, let her leap into his arms, let her hang from his neck, let her sing “alleluia” to him against his will’ (Jer. Ep. 107.4.8).¹⁷ This second iteration of the image is much more aggressive in tone. Previously the child was innocent of her influence; now she is to assert it, even against her grandfather’s will. We can read these points as an indication that Paula’s education provides an opportunity for imagining the conversion of the whole family, culminating in that of Albinus, the greatest prize. Against his will, Albinus is presented as a *candidatus*, a ‘candidate’,¹⁸ of the Christian faith because the ‘whiteness’ (*candor*) of his Christian family acts like the white garment of the catechumen¹⁹:

A holy and faithful household sanctifies the one unbeliever. He who is surrounded by a crowd of believing children and grandchildren is a candidate of the faith. I reckon that even Jupiter himself, had he had kindred like that, would have been able to believe in Christ. Let him spit on my letter and mock it, and exclaim that I am stupid or raving: this is what his son-in-law used to do before he believed. Christians are made, not born.

(Jer. Ep. 107.1.4)²⁰

The reference to Albinus’ son-in-law indicates Laeta’s husband Toxotius, who became a Christian in his adult life. This fact is used by Jerome to express hope about the eventual conversion of Albinus himself. His association with Jupiter, the highest god in the Roman pantheon, is presented in an obviously exaggerated manner, but it appears to allude to Albinus’ role as *pontifex*. This allusion is immediately expanded in the following passage, where Jerome associates Albinus’ envisaged conversion with the destruction of the corresponding ‘pagan’ part of the urban fabric of Rome and other

cities, aligning the private sphere of a Christianised household with the public sphere of the city:

The gilded Capitol is filthy, all temples of Rome are covered in soot and cobwebs, the city moves from its seats and in a huge wave the population runs past the half-ruined shrines to the martyrs' monuments. If prudence does not exact faith, shame will probably exact it eventually.

(Jer. *Ep.* 107.1.4)²¹

It is true that with the gradual establishment of new cities of imperial residence on the periphery of the Roman Empire, and especially after Constantine's foundation of Constantinople as a 'Second Rome',²² Rome's status had become somewhat diluted (although the extent of its 'decline' is still debated, and it may be far less severe than has conventionally been assumed).²³ It also appears that the cult sites of Rome may have been affected earlier and more severely by the anti-pagan legislation of the Christian emperors: C.P. Jones discusses a rescript of Constans to the urban prefect Catullinus from 342 (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.3).²⁴ This ruling restricts an earlier law of 341 against superstition and sacrifices (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.2: *cesset superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania*) to the space within the walls of Rome.²⁵ The implication is that Roman temples and pagan rituals fared worse than those in other places. As Jerome then points out at *Ep.* 107.2, Laeta's new relations on her husband's side actively contributed to this decline: the Roman Mithraeum was destroyed in 376/377 by an urban prefect from the family of the Gracchi, a *gens* to which, according to Jerome, Laeta's mother-in-law, the Elder Paula, was related.²⁶ Jerome's vision is almost, and intentionally, apocalyptic, and the effects of this destruction of the traditional gods' temples are not restricted to Rome, but they spread to other cities as well: 'Now the Egyptian Serapis has become a Christian; Marnas mourns, locked in at Gaza, and is in constant fear of the demolition of his temple' (*Ep.* 107.2.3).

The last reference is particularly intriguing. Marnas has been interpreted as the Gazan version of the Greek god Zeus.²⁷ In the context of the letter, where Jerome has already presented Paula's grandfather Albinus as equivalent to the Roman version of this god, Jupiter (107.1.4, quoted earlier), this mention can be seen to refer back to Albinus again. Furthermore, at the time of writing the letter Jerome lived in Bethlehem, only 46 miles from Gaza as the crow flies. Marnas also featured prominently in the *Life of Hilarion*, which Jerome wrote in the early 390s, that is to say, about a decade earlier than Letter 107. Hilarion's most public miracle involves the blessing of a

team of horses owned by a Christian public official, so that in the chariot race it beats that of a rival devoted to Marnas, resulting in the audience's acclamation: 'Marnas has been defeated by Christ' (*Marnas uictus a Christo est*, Jer. V. Hil. 11.11). It appears from the letter that such statements may have been premature. A decade later Marnas is still a force to be reckoned with, one of the last pagan gods holding out against the Christians, but about to be finally defeated in the wake of Albinus' anticipated conversion. In the letter there is a centrifugal dynamic to the Roman empire's Christianisation, and the most valiant Christians perpetuate the fight against paganism on its margins after the centre has long yielded. The sequence of thought draws a clear parallel between the private household of Albinus and the public sphere of the city of Rome. Albinus the *pontifex* is naturally connected with the temples of Rome, and their demise justifies Jerome's confidence in expecting his conversion.

To contrast with this depiction of the desolation of the urban fabric of the empire, Jerome offers the topos of the 'desert turned into a city' by Christian monks, a thought which goes back to the earliest monastic 'Life', that of Antony.²⁸ The new communities live at the outskirts of society. In analogy to the Romans who abandon their temples for the churches of the martyrs outside the city walls, huge crowds of barbarians make their way to Jerome's monastery in the periphery of the empire, summed up in a catalogue reminiscent of traditional tribute processions:

From India, Persia and Ethiopia we welcome crowds of monks every day; the Armenian has put down his quiver, the Huns are learning the Psalter, the frozen regions of Scythia glow with the heat of faith; the red-haired and blond army of the Getae carry their tent churches around with them, and perhaps the reason why they fight us with equal force is that they believe with the same devotion.

(Jer. Ep. 107.2.3)²⁹

After this triumphal conclusion, Jerome dismisses his entire introduction as a digression, claiming that he got carried away: 'I nearly went astray onto another subject, and while I intended to make a pitcher, with the potter's wheel turning, my hand formed an amphora'.³⁰ This statement has generally been taken at face value, with the preface considered little more than megalomaniac blustering for its own sake. But perhaps we should be more suspicious of Jerome's rhetorical *reditio* ('return to the original subject'): as is often the case with such devices, the claim that the preface does not properly belong to the text may be treated as disingenuous. In this

case the connections between the introduction and the following instructions are more relevant than has been thought so far. We shall return to this possibility later.

Jerome's disciplinary advice: sensitive or abusive?

Leaving the frame behind for the moment, let us turn to some of the criticisms made of the letter. We have extremely few sources on specifically female education in antiquity. Therefore Jerome's Letter 107 has naturally been read as an important piece of evidence, and it is often taken to be representative (with some reservations) of the approaches of its time and place. Such an approach is exemplified by Johannes Brunner, who praises the careful attention which Jerome pays to the needs of a female child, and the thoughtful approach to children's early learning.³¹ Kate Cooper likewise appears to appreciate the 'loving detail' in which Jerome devotes himself to this task.³² More recently, however, it has been argued that the nature of Jerome's instructions shows that he is not genuinely interested in children³³ and that his advice is actually harmful for a child's development. A detailed example of the second type of argument is provided by Christina Landman, whose points I give some space in what follows.³⁴

In Landman's article Jerome's approach is compared – very unfavourably – to modern feminist and educational theories, including that of the International Resilience Project as described by Edith Grotberg.³⁵ Jerome's instructions in this regard are summarised in the following categories:

1. 'Paula must be taught not to beautify her body'.³⁶ Jerome presents this point in exaggerated, satirical language:

Beware of perforating her ears, of painting (*depingo* used in a rare sense) the face consecrated to Christ with white lead and rouge (*cerussa* and *purpurissum*, two technical, low-register terms), of pressing down (*premo*, an exaggeration) her neck with pearls and gold, of burdening (*onero*, a variation on *premo*, even more exaggerated) her head with precious stones, of dyeing her hair red (*inrufo*, a word only attested in two other passages, both in works by the acerbic Christian satirist Tertullian)³⁷ and thereby foreshadowing for her the fires of hell.

(Jerome, *Ep.* 107.5.1)

This emphasis on disciplining one's body is a well-known preoccupation of late antique Christians. Treatises instructing Christians, especially female Christians, to conceal rather than

enhance their physical attractiveness are a favourite genre from the second-century Tertullian's two books *De cultu feminarum* onwards, and the preoccupation with outward demonstrations of Christian identity continued to be strong in both East and West.³⁸ In the context of education, John Chrysostom likewise argues against self-ornamentation in both boys and girls (*De inani gloria et de educandis liberis* 16–17).³⁹ Through his use of language Jerome here casts adornment of the body in such an unattractive light that it makes his instructions appear like a liberation from the constraints of conventional (especially aristocratic) feminine grooming, but Landman is right to point out that banning self-ornament is equally restrictive in prescribing a predefined scruffy appearance to which Paula must subject her body.⁴⁰

2. 'Paula must be taught abstinence in feeding and bathing her body'.⁴¹ Jerome presents himself as a moderate in these respects: he allows her to be given small amounts of wine while she is small, because 'before the years of strength, severe abstinence is dangerous to young children' (*Jer. Ep.* 107.8.2).⁴² Likewise, she may, while small, attend the baths and eat meat, 'lest her feet fail before they have begun the race'.⁴³ But once she is older her regimen is to become more severe: she is to eat only vegetables and bread as well as the occasional small fish (*Ep.* 107.10.1). Moreover, for a grown girl nakedness involves too much shame and embarrassment to be tolerated: 'I am altogether opposed to baths for an adult virgin, who ought to blush at herself and be unable to see herself naked' (*Ep.* 107.11.2).⁴⁴
3. 'Paula is to subject her bodily lusts' (*Ep.* 107.11).⁴⁵ This is the upshot of the injunctions detailed under (1) and (2): all enjoyment of physical things is considered dangerous for the soul.
4. 'Paula must be taught to make her body useful' (*Ep.* 107.10).⁴⁶ This is achieved by making her learn to spin wool, the archetypal activity of the chaste Roman matron, most memorably embodied by Lucretia.⁴⁷
5. 'Paula must be taught to read bodily references in the Scriptures as descriptions of spirituality'.⁴⁸ Here Landman diagnoses a restrictive discipline in the management of thoughts, albeit concerning bodily things: Paula may only read the Song of Songs once she has mastered the habit of reading concrete references as allegorical (*Ep.* 107.12.2). This observation underlines the interdependence of bodily and mental discipline, typical of late antique as of classical educational thought: there

is no escape into fantasies from a life marked by physical asceticism.

Landman's list may be continued: for example, Paula should not have a cheerful and attractive companion of the same age but one who is serious and badly dressed; in addition, she is to have as a minder an ascetic virgin of advanced years who can keep her on the straight and narrow in her spiritual exertions (*Ep.* 107.9.3). Jerome may be thinking here of Paula's aunt, Julia Eustochium, whom he had advised on guarding her virginity many years before, in 384.⁴⁹ A further, troubling, goal is to prevent Paula from gaining independence from her parents: 'Let her not know how to live without you; let her be terrified when she is alone' (*Ep.* 107.11.1). Landman shows that all of this is diametrically opposed to the methods of modern educational strategies, like those advocated by the Resilience Project, which is based, inter alia, on the idea that children of any gender should be encouraged to own their bodies, to articulate themselves and to gain the emotional and practical skills necessary for a responsible and independent life as an adult.⁵⁰ Put in these terms, it appears that it would have been positively abusive for a parent to subject her child to the regimen proposed by Jerome, despite his frequent asseverations that his instructions are moderate.⁵¹

Quintilian and the construction of the elite human being

There are certain parts of the letter where Jerome's attitude appears to soften beyond the mere counselling of moderation in ascetic exercise. These moments come when he discusses Paula's intellectual education, especially the earliest steps of her academic development. Thus we find the notion that Little Paula should be given 'letters made from boxwood or ivory' and that she should 'play with them, so that even her play becomes her education' (*Jer. Ep.* 107.4.2). Here the idea of enjoyment, of play, is acknowledged as a positive thing, even though it is immediately instrumentalised for the 'higher' purpose of learning the names and the order of the letters of the alphabet. But this is not the only softer note. Jerome admits that there may be value not only in playing but even in a childish appetite for rewards and competition. As Paula progresses with her studies she is to be given rewards for correct spellings and companions with whom she is to compete:

Let her join syllables for a reward, and let her be incited by little presents of the sort which please young children. Let her have girls as companions in learning whom she may envy, that she may be stung when they are praised. She must not be reproved if she is a little slow, but her abilities must be stimulated with praise; she

should be pleased when she has won and pained when she has been defeated. What you must guard against most of all is that she must not hate her lessons, so that distaste of learning is not acquired in infancy and then persists beyond an early age.

(Jer. Ep. 107.4.3–107.4.4)⁵²

Here the child's appetites for rewards, victory and glory, and even the dangerous emotions produced through competition with her peers, are not suppressed but rather exploited to ensure that she is enthusiastic about learning. These sound like much more subtle psychological methods for fostering a child's development, and they are somewhat at odds with the persistent Christian emphasis on disciplining a child's emotions.⁵³ The problem with this reading is that these passages from Jer. Ep. 107.4.2–107.4.4, 'the only place in the letter that childhood play or delight of rewards are mentioned',⁵⁴ have been taken over, with minimal adaptation, from the first-century rhetorician Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*: the final sentence of the preceding quotation is taken almost verbatim from Quint. *Inst.* 1.1.20 ('for one must guard especially against the possibility that [the student] might come to ... hate his studies and, once he has tasted their bitterness, continues to fear it beyond an early age').⁵⁵ Quintilian was the most renowned teacher of rhetoric of his time, and his work is imbued not just with his wide reading but with decades of teaching practice; his pupils included not only Pliny the Younger and (possibly) Tacitus but also the great-nephews of Emperor Domitian. In the *Institutio* he advocated that even teachers of the 'highest' art of oratory should not neglect the early years and elementary learning, and he developed an approach that was designed to utilise a pupil's natural inclinations for learning (see, for example, *Inst.* 1.3, on children with different gifts and the right measure of relaxation) rather than a rigid and inflexible system of instruction. Jerome's plagiarism of another's intellectual approach, especially in a context which seems to clash with Quintilian's pedagogic goals, makes it seem fair to deny him all credit for these more 'enlightened' ideas.⁵⁶

Finally, David Scourfield's painstaking comparison of Quintilian's original with Jerome's presentation makes Jerome appear inferior as an educational thinker. He changes the order of some precepts for the sole purpose of appearing to do something new, and the coherence and usefulness of his programme suffers as a result.⁵⁷ The overall impression of the letter's precepts is that of a 'jumble',⁵⁸ a disorganised compilation that appears as though Jerome 'had not the vaguest conception of the overall plan of the work when he put his hand to it'.⁵⁹ Although clarity and consistency in presenting a theory of (female) education may not be the point of the letter, its use of

Quintilian may point us to a different purpose.

To discover the value and purpose of the letter, it may be helpful to dwell further on a point which Quintilian's educational and Jerome's ascetic discourse have in common: both of them can be seen as forms of an ideological discourse concerned with defining and imparting excellence, the highest goal of a human being.⁶⁰ With regard to Christian culture, the notion that by mortifying one's body and desires one can achieve superiority to other Christians in the hierarchy of salvation is a familiar one. A number of important studies have emphasised that undertaking such a course of self-denial could, paradoxically, have rewards in the worldly sphere as well, not only for the individual ascetics – male or female – but also for their families.⁶¹ By telling Laeta how to bring up Paula as a strict ascetic virgin, Jerome thus demonstrates the high status of her family in Christian terms.⁶² In this sense, Letter 107 is a prospective *laudatio*: by presenting himself as offering advice, Jerome simultaneously praises Laeta for taking it, and Paula for the perfect form which her devotion will take as a result. This is the reward for the hardship involved in constantly guarding the little girl's body and soul. In his ascetic instructions, it is as though Jerome writes a biography of a perfect female ascetic in the imperative mood. In this way he raises Paula's claim to holiness to be equal to that of her aunt Eustochium, whom he had addressed in 384 with instructions on the virgin life in his most famous letter, *Jer. Ep.* 22. After the letter of consolation composed on the occasion of the death of Eustochium's sister Blesilla (*Jer. Ep.* 39), the epitaph of the Elder Paula which Jerome wrote after her death in 404 (*Ep.* 108) eventually completed Jerome's epistolary collection on the lives of four ascetic women from the same family.

There are intriguing parallels between this stance and Quintilian's attitude to his imagined pupil. Quintilian's education is aimed at turning boys into orators, a profession which he regards as the summit of human development: an orator is 'a good man skilled at speaking' (*uir bonus dicendi peritus*). This formulation, taken over from the Elder Cato, requires an inextricable connection between eloquence and moral virtue in the orator.⁶³ Quintilian formulates this goal in the Preface to the *Institutio* as a whole:

But we are educating the *perfect orator*,⁶⁴ who cannot exist if he is not a *good man*, and therefore we require of him not only an *outstanding ability to speak* but *all the virtues of the mind*. Moreover, I do not agree with those who believe that the rules for living a good and honourable life should be left to the philosophers, given that a truly civilised man with the *ability to manage both public and private affairs*, who is able to *rule cities with his counsel*, who is able to

establish laws and improve them with his judgements, is nothing else but an orator.

(Quint. *Inst.* 1. *pr.* 9–10, my italics)⁶⁵

This frame gives the impression that Quintilian is interested not so much in general education but in producing an elite human being. A close look at his formulation reveals that the very notion of ‘orator’ already entails excellence: *oratorem ... illum perfectum* might best be taken to mean ‘an orator ... you know what I mean, a perfect one’.⁶⁶ The ideological aspects of Quintilian’s approach have received attention in several of the essays collected by Olga Tellegen-Couperus.⁶⁷ For example, Jorge Fernández López notes the interplay of ‘reason’ (*ratio*), ‘usage’ (*consuetudo*) and ‘authority’ (*auctoritas*) in questions concerning the correct linguistic choice at Quint. *Inst.* 1.6.5. Fernández López points out Quintilian’s analogy between the definition of linguistic usage as ‘the agreed practice of educated men’ and that of moral *consuetudo* as ‘the agreed practice of all good men’.⁶⁸ This means that Quintilian’s conception of ‘usage’ is not equivalent to the habits of the proverbial man in the street; instead, it requires a degree of pre-acquired status in those who determine it. This, in turn, entails the existence of a body of the ‘great and the good’ whose authority decides what is acceptable and what is not. Excellence in language and behaviour is a standard which is not determined through reason alone but through the judgement of an elite.

Teresa Morgan has argued that ancient literate education as a whole was based on an elitist ideology in which the acquisition of literacy served as a line which divided those who had a chance to acquire power and authority from those who did not have it.⁶⁹ The higher a man’s level of education, the more he was enabled to participate in the sort of activities which could confer status and privilege. In turn, access to education was regulated by a child’s preexisting status, including gender and, most importantly, economic means. Thus education professionals served as gatekeepers to a person’s career development, and those on the highest level of the hierarchy, such as Quintilian himself, could share in this elevated status and enjoy its benefits.⁷⁰ Morgan further argues that Quintilian’s ideal orator is not defined as someone who is good only at winning arguments and persuading others: he is not just a (very able) participant in a debate where right and wrong are not entirely determined, but he is someone who exercises control, a ruler of men, an absolutist sort of character.⁷¹ It seems that the system of education and its hierarchies encouraged such elitism.

Quintilian is generally acclaimed as ‘a humane and kind teacher,

with a lot of common sense',⁷² whereas the modern perception of Jerome's character is much less positive. But it is precisely Quintilian's elitism, the aspect least appealing to us, which makes him an attractive model for Jerome to present his own complementary notion of asceticism. In order to understand the underlying reasons for Jerome's adaptation of Quintilian, we should look again at some of the changes which he makes to Quintilian's precepts.

The most noticeable difference is Jerome's reversal of the gender constellation in Quintilian's educational scenario. Quintilian instructs a father how to educate his son; in Jerome's letter, both parent and child are female. In contemporary fifth-century society, as in the first century, women could have no recognised public role for which education would qualify them, but it seems that Jerome honestly (albeit not consistently) believed that a female Christian ascetic could attain the same level of holiness as a male one, even if their modes of asceticism could not be identical.⁷³ Given the hold of salvation hierarchies over Jerome's imagination, a world view which he may have shared with a number of contemporaries, this attitude is more 'women-friendly' than is usually imagined.⁷⁴ In classical Rome the public sphere contained everything anyone could aspire to. During the late Roman republic, the period from which Quintilian takes most of his illustrative material, vast sums were spent on securing a high place on the ever-narrowing ladder of Sulla's *cursus honorum*. Being recognised by one's fellow citizens as a leader was a prize for which one might be prepared to risk one's existence; there was no other sphere which could produce a similarly desirable status. Admittedly, philosophers kept trying to maintain the superiority of the wise man to the successful statesman, but before the Principate of Augustus there seems to have been little general acceptance of a quietist model as advocated, for instance, in Lucretius' poem *De rerum natura*. Now, in an increasingly Christianised empire, the state of one's soul became a concern which could equal and even trump that of worldly ambition. If women could be recognised as having access to the same level of Christian excellence, this revolutionised their status. Even though women could acquire the highest prestige only by denying their physical selves, in the context of the orthodox Western church Jerome's estimation of women's potential is extraordinary.⁷⁵ Of course, as in the case of (male) monks, this status was thought of as achievable only by a very small number of women and at a high cost. But I am not concerned here with the practical consequences of this new estimation of women, but with the rhetoric and ideology of ascetic excellence, which, according to Jerome, women could attain at least in principle.⁷⁶

It is true that Jerome does not propose to guide Paula through a

course which parallels the gruelling programme set out in Quintilian's twelve books. He does not seek to make her an orator, a person who is enabled to rule and influence others through her powers of speech.⁷⁷ Besides learning to read – and to read critically – the Bible and selected Christian writers (Jer. *Ep.* 107.12), the only such element which the letter takes over from Quintilian is the insistence that Paula should learn to speak correctly (*Ep.* 107.4.6). Part of this is surely related to the probability that Jerome assumed that she would read not silently but aloud, that is, that she would pronounce all that she read, and therefore correct pronunciation would help her reading to be more precise. But even though reading the prescribed material is an activity which Jerome consistently presents as an essential part of Christian devotion, correct pronunciation would presumably still not matter too much for a woman who is constantly on her own and whose speech nobody else can hear. By paying attention to Paula's speaking, Jerome seems to envisage an audience for her, as in the models of Cornelia and Hortensia, examples which he takes over from Quintilian (Jer. *Ep.* 107.4.6, Quint. *Inst.* 1.1.6). In practice, Paula would have found this aspect of her education useful in her later position as the leader of the female half of the monastery founded by Jerome together with her own grandmother.⁷⁸ Thus the new status of female Christians found a concrete expression in Paula's later authority.

Another point worth discussing is Jerome's recommendation of early writing exercises. After following Quintilian's advice that Paula should have a set of toy letters made from ivory (Jerome adds the possibility of using boxwood, possibly from experience, as boxwood is a suitable type of wood for turning into shapes) and that her writing should be guided by a tablet in which the letters are stencilled to form grooves which she can follow, Jerome sets Paula the daunting task of training her spelling by copying the names of 'the prophets and apostles, and the whole succession of patriarchs from Adam onwards, according to Matthew and Luke'.⁷⁹ This is not paralleled in Quintilian, but Morgan finds a comparable convention in an analysis of school papyri from Egypt, where children can be seen to copy out lists of difficult and obscure names, usually from the Homeric poems.⁸⁰ Morgan analyses the elitist implications of using such material for giving children signifiers of a larger culture, the significance of which they are unlikely to understand at this stage – and those who did not have the means to go on beyond basic literate education may never have fathomed their meaning.⁸¹ As Jerome anticipates it, Paula will advance to a privileged position in her ability to contextualise the names of the prophets, apostles and patriarchs. Through her gradual mastery of the entire Bible she is supposed to acquire all the necessary

knowledge. Eventually, she will be sophisticated enough for an allegorical reading of the Song of Songs (Jer. *Ep.* 107.12.2: see earlier).

By combining ascetic and theological instructions with at least the first elements of rhetorical training, Jerome is also in dialogue with Quintilian's claim that orators are superior to philosophers because they combine practical skill and usefulness with moral excellence (*Inst.* 1. *pr.* 14–20). Quintilian satirises philosophers as people who affect a gloomy expression and strange dress as a shortcut for demanding respect, while they shrink from the hard work necessary for a true claim to wisdom.⁸² Further, Quintilian claims that philosophers achieve only a small part of the orator's brief as they appear to ask deep questions and quibble over issues of language.⁸³ Scholars have seen in Quintilian's references an allusive justification for Vespasian's expulsion of 'false' philosophers from Rome.⁸⁴ In Jerome, a gloomy face and sordid clothes are the outward marks of the serious ascetic: he advises that Paula's mode of dressing should indicate 'the one to whom she has been promised', that is Christ.⁸⁵ Such a way of dressing is not interpreted as ostentatious, but as a necessary sign of Paula's devotion, both for her and for others. The instruction comes at the start of Jer. *Ep.* 107.5, immediately after the section in which Jerome parades the largest number of Quintilianisms. If it is thus possible to assume that Quintilian's 'philosophy' is in some sense analogous to Jerome's ascetic Christianity, Jerome can be seen to reclaim deliberate outward 'philosophical' shabbiness for the student aspiring to perfect virtue. This means that he relegates Quintilian's advice on early teaching to a lower place in the overall hierarchy of his own scheme. In Quintilian, the eccentric life of the philosopher is depicted as vain and ostentatious, and the few merits found in a philosopher are already integrated into the orator's virtues; in Jerome, Paula's literate education forms but a part of her overall Christian ascetic perfection. Thus he ends his letter by claiming superiority to Aristotle, the philosopher-teacher of Alexander, whom Quintilian had already claimed as a model (see earlier):

I shall carry her on my shoulders; I, an old man, shall form her lisping words, much more renowned than the philosopher of the world, since my project is not to educate the king of the Macedons, destined to die from poison in Babylon, but the handmaid and bride of Christ, who is destined to be offered to the heavenly kingdom.

(Jer. *Ep.* 107.13.6)⁸⁶

By ending with Aristotle, Jerome restores the philosopher to his rightful place of teaching the ruler, but philosophy itself is now

improved by Christianity. The pupil to whom this Christian instruction is imparted is no mere mortal but will have the highest status in the world to come.

I should stress that the substance of the intellectual education which Jerome offers to Little Paula in this letter is not in itself a new thing of privilege. It is generally assumed that many girls participated in ancient literate education and only dropped out at the rhetorical stage.⁸⁷ The women of Jerome's Roman circle, including Paula, Eustochium and Laeta herself were evidently highly literate themselves; some of them even learned Greek and Hebrew.⁸⁸ What Jerome does for them is show the wider audience of his letters that these women are, in fact, achieving these things as well as publicising the extent and the difficulty of their ascetic deprivations.⁸⁹

Conclusion: Jerome's agenda of self-promotion

We can certainly agree that those who have criticised Letter 107's suitability for bringing up children are correct. But although Jerome's advice may be haphazard and is often rebarbative, it is clear that he was trying to be attractive to his correspondent. After all, he was angling for an appointment to be Paula's teacher: at *Ep.* 107.4.5 he postulates that Laeta should choose a teacher 'of approved age, life and erudition',⁹⁰ adopting Quintilian's analogy of the great philosopher Aristotle teaching the infant Alexander (from *Inst.* 11.23–11.24), and at the end of the letter he proposes that Paula should be sent to her aunt and grandmother at Bethlehem, that is, to his own sphere of influence. The reason he gives for this is that it is much harder to bring up a dedicated virgin in the necessarily worldly environment of a noble house at Rome (*Jer. Ep.* 107.13.1). The worldly surroundings of a married noblewoman like Laeta are too distracting and therefore dangerous for a dedicated Christian virgin. She needs to be removed from this urban environment, Jerome suggests, as soon as she is weaned, and to be brought up in a place more suitable for isolation. The contrast of this image of Rome as a bustling, affluent and seductive space with the desolate and Christianised depiction of *Jer. Ep.* 107.2.2 (see earlier) should alert us again to the fact that Jerome's points are rhetorical, not realistic.

Jerome thus claims for himself the ability and the authority to oversee this very delicate and onerous business of fostering, disciplining and shielding a very precious girl. We know that Paula did, in fact, move to Bethlehem, although this relocation seems to have taken place much later in her life, after the death of Laeta.⁹¹ *Jer. Ep.* 153.3, written in or after 418 to Pope Bonifatius, has it that Paula – who, remarkably, is still referred to as *infans*, although she must be around 17 years of age – was first brought up by Bonifatius himself (*in*

tuis nutrita manibus) and has now (recently?) been ‘imposed as a burden on [Jerome’s] neck’ (*nostris est imposita ceruicibus*), ‘a token of the sacred memory of her mother Laeta’ (*quasi pignus sanctae ac uenerabilis memoriae Laetae*); Jerome does not yet know whether he will have the strength to carry this burden (*quod onus utrum ferre ualeamus, Domini est scire*). Overall, then, Jerome’s persuasive strategy must have had an effect on Laeta, and, if Jerome’s suggestion was only followed after Laeta’s death, on her wider family as well. Just as Quintilian presents himself as the ideal teacher of the orator, Jerome here claims and receives the authority of becoming Paula’s ascetic educator.

Let us now juxtapose this conclusion of the letter with its opening, where the traditional state of the Roman Empire is overthrown by Christianity, both from the inside and through the agency of the Christian Goths (Jer. *Ep.* 107.2.3). The comparison shows Jerome trying to make a strong case that the future of education does not lie in the symbolic, physically decayed and residually ‘pagan’ urban centre of the Roman Empire but on its periphery, in the vibrant and thriving colonies of monastic communities. In framing the education of Paula with the Christianisation of her family, which is, in turn, presented as an instance and symbol of Christianisation in general, Jerome implicitly presents himself as the agent of the world’s conversion. As he himself enjoyed a high-class education at Rome under the famous grammarian Donatus, a fact of which he liked to boast,⁹² Jerome presents himself as being in the right position to salvage the ‘treasures’ of education which belong to the old, urban and ‘pagan’ ecosystem of Rome and to transport them safely to the new ecosystem of the monastic sphere. The transformation of traditional education and its values into an increasingly coherent Christian system is associated with Jerome’s own movement from the centre to the periphery. It is therefore from the rural margins that he claims the authority to reform the degenerate centre. Thus in the letter notions of pedagogy and education are closely linked with the physical context in which education takes place. Human agents have the power not only to move between different spaces (as Jerome moved from the provinces to Rome as a young man and to Bethlehem in middle age) but also to change the meaning of the environment in which they find themselves.

A corollary is the new definition of the relationship between family and public sphere. Jerome seeks to co-opt Little Paula to his ascetic programme by removing her from the care of her family and the corrupting influence of their Roman house. But this appropriation required careful negotiation. In Letter 107 Jerome shows, therefore, that he is both committed to a sufficiently rigorous approach to

asceticism (allowing for just the right amount of moderation) and capable of offering members from the old ‘pagan’ elite a distinguished place in the new Christian system. He combines erudition, moderation and sensibility with a radical vision of asceticism as a means to reach the very top of the Christian hierarchy, a route available to both men and women. For an audience accustomed to excellence and the recognition of excellence, an audience still cherishing its cultural heritage, is he not the ideal instructor? If even the gods – Jupiter, Marnas and Sarapis – are falling for the true faith, it is no shame for their *pontifex* Albinus to follow suit. By displaying his own qualifications and his sensitivity to the status anxieties of a noble Roman family, Jerome uses this letter to advertise his unique ability to help this class of people adjust to the new climate of a Christianised empire.⁹³ Seen from this angle, the potential benefits for Jerome are much greater than merely controlling the upbringing of one girl. If this letter was circulated, it would have enabled Jerome to be seen to offer a whole class of partly Christianised aristocratic families the opportunity to remain in control by integrating the old criteria for elite identity with the new criteria of asceticism as the elite identity among Christians.

Notes

- 1 Rebenich (2002, 131).
- 2 Marrou (1956, 332) counsels against taking this letter as a general rule; Scourfield (1983, 14): ‘[the letter’s organisation] does nothing to make us believe that it was designed as a sort of manifesto for the education of girls dedicated to the virgin life’. See also Kelly (1975, 275), Alberici and Harlow (2007) and Katz (2007).
- 3 Katz (2007, 119): ‘[Letter 107] has, surprisingly, been interpreted by some scholars as a unique example of Jerome’s fondness for children, his appreciation of their needs, and his genuine interest in the education of young children’.
- 4 Cain (2009).
- 5 See Jer. *Ep.* 108.1.1.
- 6 Jerome consoles Paula the Elder over this loss in *Ep.* 39.
- 7 See Jer. *Ep.* 108.6 for Paula’s departure.
- 8 Scourfield (1983, 477). See Cooper (1996, 68–91) for the social context and the significance of parents devoting a daughter to a life as a Christian virgin.
- 9 It is particularly intriguing to speculate whether Laeta would have gone through with the dedication if the child had been a boy and thus an heir of the family: the desirability of sons is confirmed by Jerome’s promise to Laeta that her dedication of Paula will be rewarded with the birth of sons (*filios*, *Ep.* 107.3.2: Latin masculine plurals can include feminine individuals, but *fili* seem to be more essentially gendered as masculine than, for example, *liberi*). Feichtinger (1995, 220) thinks it is possible that Laeta would equally have given up a first-born son. In the Eastern part of the empire, Basil of Caesarea had received not only girls but also boys dedicated to the monastic life by their parents: he gives advice on the question of at which age the young person’s monastic dedication can be taken as binding in his *Long Rule* (*Regula fusi*us *tractata*) 15.1, PG vol. 31

col. 952. But the situation in the West, and in the context of an aristocratic Roman family in particular, may have been different. On the dedication of children see now Vuolanto (2015).

- 10 See Feichtinger (1995, 25, n. 4) for the importance of differentiating between ‘surface functions’ and ‘deep functions’ when reading Jerome’s letters.
- 11 *Si qua mulier habet uirum infidelem et hic consentit habitare cum ea, ne dimittat uirum, sanctificatus est enim uir infidelis in uxore fideli et sanctificata est mulier infidelis in fratre. alioquin filii uestri inmundi essent, nunc autem sancti sunt.*
- 12 PLRE I, Albinus 8: *uir clarissimus, consularis Numidia* 364/367, attested in 18 inscriptions from Numidia; identical with Caecina Albinus in Macr. *Sat.* 1.2.15; cf. stemma 13 in PLRE. Cameron (2011, 231–272) argues that the *Saturnalia* is not anti-Christian but only nostalgic for Roman traditions; this line is accepted in Robert Kaster’s edition of the *Saturnalia*, Kaster (2011, 1. xxi–xxiv). Jones (2014, 151–157) warns that Macrobius’ religious affiliations have still not been decisively established.
- 13 For the historical problems involved in this sort of notion, see Cameron (2011); cf. Jones (2014, 5–6), who emphasises the different associations involved in the Latin *pagani* (originally ‘rustics’) in the West and the Greek *Hellênes* in the East, the latter with connotations of superior cultivation rather than rusticity.
- 14 Cf. Feichtinger (1995, 6).
- 15 *Quis hoc unquam crederet, ut Albinus pontificis neptis de repromissione matris nasceretur, ut praesente et gaudente auo paruulae adhuc lingua balbutiens alleluia resonaret et uirginem Christi in suo gremio nutrirer senex?*
- 16 On the rhetorical use of children as moral examples for adults cf. Leyerle (2013, 579):

Extolled, on one hand, as a prime example of admirable humility, freedom from passion, and nonsexual behavior, the child was also invoked pejoratively, as a figure of unrestrained passion, attachment to the world, and carnal desire. Early Christian authors mobilize both sets of associations to convey their understanding of basic human nature and to shame their listeners into moral renovation.

See also Bakke (2005, 57–65) for the idea of ‘children as paradigms for adults’.

- 17 *Cum auum uiderit, in pectus eius transiliat, e collo pendeat, nolenti alleluia decantet.* Jerome liked this image so much that he used it again in his epitaph of the Elder Paula, *Ep.* 108.26.5 (AD 404): *non debeo silentio praeterire quanto exultauerit gaudio quod Paulam, neptem suam Laeta et Toxotio generatam, immo uoto et futurae uirginitatis repromissione conceptam, audierit in cunis et crepitaculis balbutiente lingua alleluia cantare ...* (‘nor may I pass over in silence with what great joy she [the Elder Paula] exulted when she heard that Paula, her granddaughter born from Laeta and Toxotius and conceived thanks to a vow and the counter-promise that she would be a virgin, was in her cradle and her swaddling clothes singing “alleluia” with a lisping voice’).
- 18 We may also see here an allusion to Albinus’ consular status, for which his ‘candidacy’, a period in which he would have been dressed in white, was a prerequisite.
- 19 The central significance of the family in Christian discussions of education is evident in many texts: see Leyerle (2013) for the heightened interest in parents and children among Christian writers. In parallel to Jerome we may consider the authority and responsibility of a child’s father as depicted in John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria et de educandis liberis*.
- 20 *Sancta et fidelis domus unum sanctificat infidelem. candidatus est fidei, quem filiorum*

- et nepotum credens turba circumdat. ego puto etiam ipsum Iouem, si habuisset talem cognationem, potuisse in Christum credere. despuat licet et inrideat epistulam meam et me uel stultum uel insanum clamitet, hoc et gener eius faciebat (cf. Luke 6:23 haec enim faciebant prophetis patres eorum), antequam crederet. fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani.
- 21 *Auratum squalet Capitolium, fuligine et araneorum telis omnia Romae templa cooperta sunt, mouetur urbs sedibus suis et inundans populus ante delubra semiruta currit ad martyrum tumulos. si non extorquet fidem prudentia, extorqueat saltem uerecundia.*
 - 22 On the relationship between the two see Grig and Kelly (2012).
 - 23 The continued importance of Rome in the fifth century is documented by Humphries (2012).
 - 24 Jones (2014, 25).
 - 25 *Quamquam omnis superstitio penitus eruenda sit, tamen uolumus, ut aedes templorum, quae extra muros sunt positae, intactae incorruptaeque consistant. Nam cum ex nonnullis uel ludorum uel circensium uel agonum origo fuerit exorta, non conuenit ea conuelli, ex quibus populo Romano praebeatur priscarum sollemnitas uoluptatum.*
 - 26 *Ep.* 108.1.1, 108.3.1; see Scourfield (1983, 466–467).
 - 27 Mark the Deacon, *Vita Porphyrii* 19.9–19.10, 64.8 (ed. Grégoire and Kugener, Paris 1930). It would be tempting to discuss in more detail the relationship of the events narrated in the *V. Porph.* to *Jer. Ep.* 107, but this depends on accepting the *Vita's* authenticity, of which I am not (yet) convinced. The case for scepticism is made by Barnes (2010, 260–284).
 - 28 Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 14.7: *hē erêmos epolisthê* ('the desert became a city').
 - 29 *De India, Perside et Aethiopia monachorum cotidie turbas suscipimus; deposuit faretras Armenius, Huni discunt psalterium, Scythiae frigora feruent calore fidei; Getarum rutilus et flauus exercitus ecclesiarum circumfert tentoria et ideo forsitan contra nos aequa pugnat acie, quia pari religione confidunt.*
 - 30 *Paene lapsus sum ad aliam materiam et currente rota, dum urceum facere cogito, amphoram finxit manus.*
 - 31 Brunner (1910).
 - 32 Cooper (1996, 79): 'The letter goes on to describe in loving detail every aspect of how Laeta's daughter should be brought up'.
 - 33 Katz (2007, 119).
 - 34 Landman (2006).
 - 35 Grotberg (1995).
 - 36 Landman (2006, 149).
 - 37 *Apologeticus* 22.12 (of a beard turned red through magic), and *De ieiunio aduersus psychicos* 17.2 (CSEL, p. 296 line 22), where the participle *inrufatus* is used to characterise the lentil soup offered by Jacob to his brother Esau in exchange for his birth right (cf. Gen. 25:29).
 - 38 The classic treatment of this issue is Brown (1988), which inspired a huge amount of scholarly work. For my argument it is also relevant that there appears to have been a tradition in 'classical' antiquity that orators were also supposed to subdue the sexual aspects of their bodies for the sake of a higher good: see Dugan (2001) on the meaning of Calvus' use of leaden plates on his kidneys as reported in Plin. *Nat.* 34.166.
 - 39 Ed. Anne-Marie Malingrey, Sources Chrétiennes, Paris 1972.
 - 40 The strict dichotomy between 'constraint' and 'liberation' in the sartorial choices of ascetic Christian women has recently been questioned by Wilkinson (2015), who emphasises that the display of 'modesty' is as much an expression of a woman's agency as the display of its opposite.

- 41 Landman (2006, 149).
- 42 *Ante annos robustae aetatis periculosa est teneris grauis abstinentia*. Osiek (2012, 406) acknowledges Jerome's 'good sense' in this regard.
- 43 *Ne prius deficient pedes quam currere incipiant*.
- 44 *Mihi omnino in adulta iurgine lauacra displicent, quae se ipsam debet erubescere et nudam uidere non posse*. There is a parallel here with a comment in Plutarch about pre-classical Roman mores: in his biography of Cato the Elder (*Cat. mai.* 20.7–20.8) he claims that Roman men used not to bathe together with their sons(-in-law) because they were ashamed to be naked in front of them.
- 45 Landman (2006, 149).
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Livy 1.57: Lucretia's husband and his companions find her 'late at night, devoted to wool'.
- 48 Landman (2006, 150).
- 49 Letter 22; the argument that Jerome has Eustochium in mind here is made by Petersen (1994, 35).
- 50 Cf. Grotberg (1995): children's resilience is expressed in their ability to identify with key positive propositions starting with the assertions 'I am', 'I have' and 'I can', all of which is denied under Jerome's regime.
- 51 We should not forget the fate of Little Paula's late aunt, Laeta's sister-in-law, Blesilla, who died at the age of 20 after adopting an extreme lifestyle of fasting and self-mortification under Jerome's guidance in 384. Jerome admits that he was blamed for her death (*Jer. Ep.* 39.6.2).
- 52 *Syllabas iungat ad praemium, et, quibus illa aetas delectari potest, munusculis inuietur. habeat et in discendo socias, quibus inuideat, quarum laudibus mordeatur. non est obiurganda, si tardior sit, sed laudibus excitandum ingenium; et uicisse se gaudeat et uictam doleat. cauendum in primis, ne oderit studia, ne amaritudo eorum percepta in infantia ultra rudes annos transeat*. Cf. *Jer. Ep.* 128.1.3 (AD 413), on the education of Pacatula, where Jerome details the delights which should aid the young girl's reading progress: *proponatur ei crustula mulsi praemia* (cf. *Hor. Sat.* 1.1.25) *et, quicquid gustu suaue est, quod uernat in floribus, quod rutilat in gemmis, quod blanditur in pupis, acceptura festinet*. This passage conflicts somewhat with the ornamental and dietary restraints of *Jer. Ep.* 107.5 and 107.8–107.10.
- 53 Cf. Leyerle (2013, 570–571, 574).
- 54 Katz (2007, 122).
- 55 *Nam id in primis cauere oportebit, ne studia ... oderit et amaritudinem semel perceptam ultra rudes annos reformidet*.
- 56 Scourfield (1983, 435) and Katz (2007, 122).
- 57 For example, Scourfield (1983, 435): 'the rearranging of the order of the precepts borrowed from Quintilian in c.4 does not appear to have been carefully thought out'.
- 58 Scourfield (1983, 434).
- 59 Ibid., 435.
- 60 Other scholars have hinted at this, for example, Scourfield (1983, 438–439).
- 61 See, for example, Clark (1986b, 178–180), Clark (1994, 140–141), Feichtinger (1995) and Cooper (1996).
- 62 Cooper (1996, 79): 'To consecrate a daughter's virginity afforded a family a privileged point of contact with church structure and tradition while affirming time-honored ideals of filial piety and innocence'. See also Feichtinger (1995, 235–249).
- 63 Quint. *Inst.* 12.1.1 (Cato, *Libri ad M. filium* fr. 14 Jordan).

- 64 The topos of the 'perfect orator' is a classic topic for debate; see especially Cicero, *De oratore* (a dialogue 'On the orator'), *De optimo genere oratorum* ('On the best type of orators', a short treatise not published in Cicero's lifetime) and *Orator* (a treatise seeking to define the ideal orator), as well as Cicero's *Brutus*, which contains a history of oratory.
- 65 *Oratorem autem instituimus illum perfectum, qui esse nisi uir bonus non potest, ideoque non dicendi modo eximiam in eo facultatem sed omnis animi uirtutes exigimus. neque enim hoc concesserim, rationem rectae honestaeque uitae, ut quidam putauerunt, ad philosophos relegendam, cum uir ille uere ciuilis et publicarum priuatarumque rerum administrationi accommodatus, qui regere consiliis urbes, fundare legibus, emendare iudiciis possit, non alius sit profecto quam orator.*
- 66 In his cultural context Quintilian can only conceive of such a perfect human being as male, even though he does admit that there have been examples of women successfully delivering speeches (Quint. *Inst.* 1.1.6–1.1.7). Jerome follows him in citing the example of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, and Hortensia (*Ep.* 107.4.6). Although intellectually obsolete, the notion of male superiority is still implicit in much of Western culture, which means that it is not redundant to point out Quintilian's bias.
- 67 Tellegen-Couperus (2003), especially the contributions by Fernández López and Murphy.
- 68 Fernández López (2003, 33). See also Morgan (1998b, 258–259).
- 69 Morgan (1998a, 19–20).
- 70 Kaster (1988, 201–230). A late antique example is the grammarian Servius, who is depicted as associating with senatorial personages in Macrobius' fifth-century *Saturnalia*.
- 71 Morgan (1998a, 226–233; 1998b, 252). Quintilian's often-criticised closeness to Emperor Domitian, whom he praises in several extended passages, has been associated with his ideological view of *communis utilitas*, the upshot of which is that the perfect orator's goals, including his ethics, are aligned with the interests of the state, that is, the emperor: Ussani (2003).
- 72 Tellegen-Couperus (2003, 19).
- 73 Noted by Feichtinger (1995, 17). At *Ep.* 22.21.5 Jerome claims that women are particularly suited to the ascetic life because of the origin of Christianity in the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary: 'Death came through Eve, life through Mary. Therefore the gift of virginity also flowed more richly to women, because it began from a woman' (*mors per Euam, uita per Mariam. ideoque et ditius uirginitatis donum fluxit in feminas, quia coepit a femina*). He also uses ascetic women to criticise the deficient dedication of male ascetics, in passages such as *Ep.* 122.4.3 (dated to 408): 'For shame! The frailer sex defeats the secular world while the stronger sex is defeated by the secular world. Of such a great achievement a woman is the leader, and you refuse to follow her, in whose salvation you are a candidate of faith?' (*pro pudor! fragilior sexus uincit saeculum et robustior superatur a saeculo. tanti dux femina facti est et non sequeris eam, in cuius salute candidatus es fidei?*). Note the verbal parallel here with *Ep.* 107.1.4, quoted earlier, p. 90–91). In the same letter (122.4.5) Jerome claims that 'souls do not know the differentiation of sex' (*animae ... quae sexus nescit diuersitatem*). For a discussion of these passages see McNamara (1984).
- 74 See the important and nuanced discussion in Feichtinger (1995, 108, 132, 137–163).
- 75 Again, the East is a different matter. Clement of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea and Palladius all admit the possibility that a woman can become 'masculine' through asceticism: Feichtinger (1995, 147). The radical version of the essential

- negligibility of sexual difference is formulated by Origen, whose intellectual influence on Jerome was considerable: Feichtinger (1995, 148–149).
- 76 See Feichtinger (1995) *passim*.
- 77 Even so, there is no reason to be too pessimistic about her oratorical opportunities: for example, at *Ep.* 108.25.4, Jerome praises the Elder Paula for speaking out ‘in a public voice’ (*uoce publica*) against ‘the enemies of the Lord’.
- 78 Paula is included in the greetings of Letters 134.2 and 143.2.
- 79 *Ipsa nomina, per quae consuescet paulatim uerba contexere, non sint fortuita, sed certa et coaceruata de industria, prophetarum uidelicet atque apostolorum, et omnis ab Adam patriarchum series de Matheo Lucaque descendat, ut, dum aliud agit, futurae memoriae praeparetur*. For the ‘intimidating’ nature of this task see Katz (2007, 122).
- 80 See also Cribiore (1996, 42–43), with references to photographs in the appendix.
- 81 Morgan (1998a, 77, 101–104).
- 82 *Non enim uirtute ac studiis ut haberentur philosophi laborabant, sed uultum et tristitiam et dissentientem a ceteris habitum pessimis moribus praetendebant*, Quint. *Inst.* 1. *pr.* 15.
- 83 Quint. *Inst.* 1. *pr.* 16.
- 84 Ussani (2003, 290).
- 85 *Ipsae habitus et uestitus doceat eam cui promissa sit*, Jer. *Ep.* 107.5.1.
- 86 *Gestabo umeris, balbutientia senex uerba formabo multo gloriosior mundi philosopho, qui non regem Macedonum Babylonio periturum ueneno, sed ancillam et sponsam Christi erudiam regnis caelestibus offerendam*.
- 87 Bloomer (2011, 191) and Morgan (1998a, 4, 48–49).
- 88 Jer. *Ep.* 39.1.2–39.1.3 for Paula’s daughter Blesilla; *Ep.* 108.26 for Paula and Eustochium; *Ep.* 127 for Marcella. See Kelly (1975, 97).
- 89 See earlier, p. 108–109; Cain (2009) on the circulation of selected letters as ‘books’ for propagandistic purposes.
- 90 *Magister probae aetatis et uitae atque eruditionis est eligendus*.
- 91 Katz (2007, 127).
- 92 For example in his *Apology against Rufinus*, 1.16 (lines 26–31): ‘I assume that you have read the commentaries ... on Terence by my teacher Donatus’; and in his continuation of Eusebius’ *Chronicon* (GCS 47, p. 239): ‘Victorinus the rhetorician and Donatus the grammarian, my teacher, are held in high regard at Rome’.
- 93 Cf. Cain (2009, 166): ‘Jerome accordingly went to great lengths to convince prospective followers why he was a more competent spiritual director than his many rivals and why his teachings were intrinsically superior to theirs’.

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Abbreviations

- GCS, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (Leipzig and Berlin 1897–)
- PG, Patrologiae Graecae cursus completus, accurate J.-P. Migne (Paris 1857–1866).
- PLRE, The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, eds. A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale and J. Morris, 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–1992.

The sixth-century city in the Roman East

Survival or demise of the traditional urban context?

Ine Jacobs

In his oration *Apologia Mimorum*, written presumably sometime before the year AD 542,¹ Choricus of Gaza defends the mimes against attacks by Christian theologians. He stresses their entertainment value, emphasises their importance to men's moral education and denies any negative effects they might have on the audience. As remarked by Claudia Tiersch, the conflict that Choricus described was not a religious one, he was defending an ancient cultural tradition against monastic and theological attacks.² The existence of the School of Gaza and the literary output of its authors suggest that philhellenism and classical culture could still be very strong, even among Christians around the turn of the fifth and the first half of the sixth centuries. Scholars like Procopius, Choricus and John of Gaza have been named representatives of a Christian learned culture that painlessly blended classical-Hellenic education (*paideia*) with Christian belief and piety.³ Nevertheless, outside of Gaza, the sixth century appears to have been a period in which tensions between Christian religious beliefs and values and classical culture were reaching a climax. Unsurprisingly, the main battleground for such conflicts was the city, where classical culture and pagan traditions had been deeply imbedded in every aspect of daily life, in all institutions, in every ceremony and feast, as well as in all of the architecture and decoration. Such conflicts were not new; on the contrary, they are attested regularly in literary sources already from the end of the fourth century onwards. However, whereas the opinions expressed in sermons and letters by Church fathers initially appear to have had only a limited impact on contemporary society,⁴ some 100 years later the effects appear to have been multiplying.

In this chapter, I will examine how representative the philhellenic opinions of the School of Gaza still were for sixth-century city-dwellers at large by discussing the contemporary urban environment.

In particular, I will scrutinise the fate of both the theatre and that of statuary decoration, aspects of the city that were closely associated with classical Antiquity and Hellenic culture.⁵ By the start of the sixth century both the theatre and statuary had known a very long history. However, among others because of their recurrent and sometimes strong references to pagan and mythological personae, myths and customs, they were not particularly appreciated by more extremist Christian factions in society. I will examine archaeological evidence for theatres and statuary in the Late Roman province of *Palaestina Prima*, to which Gaza belonged, but will supplement these data with further evidence from the Roman Near East and Asia Minor. In addition, I will stress the importance of archaeological evidence for estimating the continuity of classical culture. In the case of theatres, we possess quite a lot of literary evidence, both from the side of proponents and opponents, to which material remains can be added, compared and evaluated. In the case of statuary, we are a lot less well informed, and it is worthwhile to check whether and how archaeology can advance our knowledge and interpretation.

In the last three decades, much has been written about the changes taking place in the city in the late antique and Early Byzantine centuries, roughly between the fourth and the seventh centuries AD.⁶ The sixth century in particular has been the focus of an extensive monograph by Helen Saradi, who combines literary, iconographic and archaeological sources to reconstruct what a city would have looked like at that time.⁷ Although such studies have greatly contributed to our knowledge, archaeological evidence is either lacking or remains an underused source of information.⁸ It is true that pertinent evidence is very diverse and sometimes difficult to trace down or access, making it very difficult to get a general overview. Moreover, there are many methodological difficulties related to the archaeological research on the sixth-century city. Despite the increase of scholarly interest in the period of Late Antiquity, dating individual monuments remains extremely difficult. Moreover, especially in the sixth century, new building largely remained limited to churches, fortifications and streets. Existing monuments such as council halls, baths and theatres were being repaired and renovated, but these interventions were often humble in character. Consequently, they are not always noticed or published and very rarely dated.⁹ Finally, many activities, such as day-to-day maintenance of a theatre or passive preservation of statuary left no material traces at all.¹⁰ And yet, as I intend to demonstrate in this chapter, material evidence can be a significant indicator for (changes in) culture and religion, certainly when it is combined with literary, epigraphic and iconographic evidence. When handled with care, a reconstruction of the urban environment that

takes archaeological evidence into account can make an invaluable contribution to the debate on the continuity of classical culture at the end of Antiquity. In contrast to most literary sources, material evidence is not biased or does not have an agenda (although excavators, of course, might). Most of the sixth-century literary sources that we possess focus on a few cities such as Constantinople, Antioch or Gaza, but archaeology provides us with information on a large variety of both smaller and larger sites. Consequently, material evidence can at the very least demonstrate how appreciation for theatre buildings or statuary differed from region to region and even from site to site. If properly analysed, it can therefore add detail to what we know from other sources, it can either support or contradict them. Finally, as we will see, material evidence can also illuminate practices that literary sources have failed to mention entirely.

The theatre

By the start of Late Antiquity, the Greek tragedies and comedies that we today associate with classical theatre had already been largely replaced by other kinds of shows, the most important being the mimes and pantomimes. Both genres often were still strongly reminiscent of paganism.¹¹ Mimes were a very old form of farce, performed by troupes of male and female actors, the plots of which were based on daily life or ancient myths. They were explicitly sexual and often offensive to certain subgroups in society.¹² Conversely, pantomimes were a sort of tragic dance or rhythmic movement performed by a single actor or actress who enacted all roles, possibly with diverse masks.¹³ Themes were taken from ancient drama and myths. Consequently, late antique spectators would still be watching the adventures of Hercules and Dionysus and be instructed in the love escapades of the ancient gods on a regular basis.



Figure 6.1 The theatre of Bostra (photo by author).



Figure 6.2 The bathing of the child Dionysus on the theatre frieze at Nysa on the Meander (Caria; photo by author).

We hear about such performances taking place in private houses, on

the street or on the market square in Late Antiquity, but most often they were set in a traditional theatre building. A typical theatre in the provinces of the Roman Near East was of the Roman type, meaning that the seating area (*cavea*) was semi-circular and directly connected to the imposing stage area (*proscenium*, [Figure 6.1](#)).¹⁴ The scene building (*scaenae frons*) was articulated by rectangular and/or semi-circular niches and fronted by a columnar architecture over two or three storeys. Both the niches and *aediculae* were filled with statues of local benefactors, emperors, personifications and divinities, whereas the bottom of the *scaenae frons* was decorated with a frieze depicting scenes or stories from classical mythology ([Figure 6.2](#)). Actors performed on the high stage (*pulpitum/logeion*) in front of the scene building. Spectators could reach their seats through a system of corridors and staircases in the vaulted substructures underneath the seating area. Certain sections were reserved for particular population groups or even individuals, as indicated by place inscriptions.¹⁵

These theatres were often huge structures. Their *cavea* could reach a diameter of over 100 m and could seat several thousands of spectators. The North Theatre of Gerasa (D: 59 m) could accommodate between 2,200 and 2,800; the city's larger South Theatre (D: 76 m) could accommodate 5,000–6,300.¹⁶ The theatre of nearby Bosra (D: 88.30 m) had a capacity between 6,600 and 8,300 spectators,¹⁷ and that of Philadelphia (D: 102 m) had a capacity between 9,100 and 11,400.¹⁸ Performances staged in these theatres could therefore reach a very large number of people. In some cities, more than one theatre was discovered, one often much larger than the other. Without epigraphic evidence, the function of the smaller theatres is difficult to determine. Some of them have been called an odeum or concert hall (e.g. the North Theatre of Gerasa), others have been called a bouleuterion or council hall (e.g. Aphrodisias, D: 45.60 m) and others were cult theatres (e.g. Birketein, D: 31 m) or private theatres.¹⁹ Their form and decoration is, however, largely identical. When the presence of a stage can be attested, it can in any case be assumed that a theatre-like building, large or small, was used for performances, although this does not exclude political gatherings being organised or panegyrics being delivered at other times.²⁰

The fourth to early sixth centuries

There can be no doubt that the theatre initially remained highly popular in large areas of the late antique East.²¹ Laws of the end of the fourth century confirm that the imperial government encouraged the continuance of spectacles and festivals.²² They could be assimilated in the new, Christianised society by removal of sacrifice, superstition and offensive depictions²³ and continue on in a secular

form. However, such compromising solutions were not sufficient for more ascetic church leaders.²⁴ Augustine and Chrysostom were only the most famous among many Christian orators who preached for the abolition of the institution of the theatre all together. Their fierce critiques revolve around three key issues. First and foremost, the staged performances remained reminiscent of pagan gods and even sacrifice.²⁵ Second, some Christian leaders were opposed to the theatre based on moral grounds. Theatre performances, and mimes in particular, included dancing performances, sexual themes, erotically charged music and obscene songs that afterwards echoed in the streets.²⁶ Third, the competitive donations for entertainment and other civic causes were judged by Christian preachers as vanity and ambition. They would rather see the large sums of money invested in Christian causes.²⁷ In addition, theatre shows and horse races were direct competitors for the Church.²⁸ As apparent in some of John Chrysostom's complaints, members of his congregation preferred these forms of entertainment over his sermons.²⁹

In such complaints about public spectacles and festivities, a more general concern about society is apparent. Church fathers on the whole were deeply worried about the authenticity of the conversion and salvation of their flock, who, though baptised, clung to traditions and customs that were not compatible with a true Christian way of life, at least in their opinion. Their protests, however, appear to have had very little effect. As will be discussed later, there is plentiful evidence for theatre repair and renovation in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, whereas the only concession from the side of the central administration was an edict forbidding festivals and performances on Sunday the day of the Lord, as well as other important Christian festive days.³⁰

By the early sixth century, seemingly not that much had changed.³¹ Mimes and pantomimes were obviously still staged; their inspiration source remained the same; they were still sponsored by high magistrates and wealthy individuals³²; the visitor numbers were high³³; and, consequently, the complaints remained numerous.³⁴ In the early sixth century, Jacob of Serugh, Bishop of Batnae in North Syria, still protested that:

[the actor] mimes the stories of the gods, and burns perfumes in the plays, in order that he may do great honour to tales which are true for him. If this is not so, why then does he burn incense at that time to the Fortune of anything? All this pertains to paganism.³⁵

Both Jacob of Serugh and Severus of Antioch, patriarch of the region, as well as other contemporary authors still raise moral objections, whereas the feeling of direct competition lingered as well.³⁶ The only

argument that has largely disappeared is that of a vain waste of money.

If we look at the archaeological evidence for theatre buildings in the Roman Near East, a similar, but more detailed picture emerges. First of all, it is clear that some theatres were already abandoned by the later fourth century, possibly after an earthquake in 363. Other theatres survived much longer though, into the sixth century. Quite a few of these long-lasting monuments, such as that at Shuni near Caesarea Maritima,³⁷ Hammat-Gader near Gadara and Birketein near Gerasa (Figure 6.3), were in fact relatively small cult theatres with associated pools. At Birketein, an inscription dated to the year 535 referred to the *Maioumas* festival, a late antique aquatic festival, associated with several of the ancient pagan deities including Dionysus and Aphrodite.³⁸ Despite various attempts to prohibit it, it remained highly popular and was still celebrated in a bath at Constantinople as late as 778.³⁹ Birketein was obviously still in use in the middle of the sixth century, and so was Shuni, as Choricus in his *Apologia mimorum* (§95–§96) gave an account of a festival held there, in the presence of the mayor and community notables, in which all the stage members and rhetoricians in the city appeared.⁴⁰ Although there were no doubt still many pagans around in this period,⁴¹ there is little doubt that these festivals were enthusiastically attended by Christians as well.

The larger urban theatre of Caesarea Maritima (D: c. 100 m), capital of the province *Palaestina Prima*, to which Gaza belonged, was located to the south of the city centre and may very well still have been in use in the early sixth century. Eventually, it would be incorporated into a new intramural fortress, the date of which is not entirely certain, but which is nowadays placed in the later sixth or early seventh century.⁴² What happened to the monument between its final phase of renovation in the later fourth century and the later sixth or early seventh century remains unclear. The theatre of Neapolis, a city in the same province, which was even bigger than that of Caesarea Maritima, still underwent changes in the 'Byzantine period'.⁴³ The theatre of Skythopolis, capital of *Palaestina Secunda*, may still have existed in the early sixth century, though in a rather poor state.⁴⁴ Other theatres that probably continued in use in the fifth and sixth centuries include those of Bosra (capital of *Arabia*), Daphne (the rich suburb of Antioch, capital of *Syria Prima*) and Petra (capital of *Palaestina Tertia*).⁴⁵ Most evidence for the survival and continued appreciation of urban theatres therefore comes from provincial capitals, but the archaeological and iconographic evidence pertaining to Neapolis, the literary and iconographic evidence for Gaza, as well as the sermon on the theatre by Jacob of Serugh,⁴⁶ suggest that

elsewhere as well the buildings were still in use.



Figure 6.3 The theatre and pools of Birketein
(APAAME_19980516_DLK-0161 © David L Kennedy, Aerial
Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East).

Detailed archaeological evidence pertaining to the condition of these buildings and their decoration is, however, scanty, and it is useful to broaden our scope to the region of Asia Minor.⁴⁷ In this region as well, some theatres were abandoned long before our period, especially in smaller towns.⁴⁸ At Hierapolis, capital of *Phrygia Secunda*, part of the scene building collapsed over the course of the fifth or maybe the early sixth century and was not rebuilt thereafter.⁴⁹ Provincial capitals, however, again often had functional theatres far into the sixth century.⁵⁰ Evidence for continuity in this region includes not only inscriptions and structural changes but also graffiti, updates of statuary in the theatre façade and Christian interventions to the structure. For example, graffiti in the theatre of Ephesus, capital of the diocese of *Asiana*, attest to its use in the sixth century, whereas even its statuary decoration was still updated in the Justinianic period (527–565).⁵¹ At Aphrodisias, capital of the province *Caria*, a statuary base mentions the name of Vitianus, governor of Caria between the late fifth and the mid-sixth centuries.⁵² Texts and graffiti mentioning the Blues and the Greens, two opposing factions in society, inscribed in the seats of the theatre in any case indicate activities until and possibly after the mid-sixth century.⁵³ Likewise, for the theatre of Perge, capital of *Pamphylia*, it has even been suggested that it was

restored under the reign of Justinian. The monument still awaits full publication though.⁵⁴ At Side, the second largest city of *Pamphylia* and ecclesiastical capital of the church province *Pamphylia Prima*, fifth- or sixth-century repairs to the pillars and vaults of the theatre were executed under Phronton and Theodoros, both of them important magistrates or Fathers of the City (*pater tēs poleos*).⁵⁵ Such inscriptions commemorating late antique repairs to theatres clearly testify that members of the higher elite were still willing to invest in these traditional monuments. These donations suggest that the theatre was still considered a medium valid for elite self-representation into the sixth century.⁵⁶

Although the staging of theatre plays therefore continued, at least in the bigger cities of the Roman East, the material remains of these monuments suggest localised efforts to remove elements most strongly linked with the pagan past for the benefit of Christian spectators. Both the late fourth or early fifth-century renovations at the theatre of Caesarea Maritima and that of Petra encompassed architectural changes to the scene buildings that curtailed all further display of statuary. The niches were filled with rubble and blocked by walls faced with marble revetment.⁵⁷ There were no structural reasons for these changes, making a religious motivation – such as the desire to remove the visual representations of the pagan gods – a likely possibility. In Asia Minor, where the statuary programmes of theatres are often preserved,⁵⁸ more selective changes to theatre decoration can be distinguished. A good example is that of the scene building of the theatre at Aphrodisias, where a depiction of Aphrodite, the tutelary goddess of the city, was chipped away in a marble relief, although many other statues and reliefs of gods, goddesses, muses and Nikes remained in place.⁵⁹ The goddess suffered a similar fate elsewhere in the city as well. Her statues have been found broken up, her depictions on the reliefs of the Sebasteion were defaced ([Figure 6.4](#)), her bust was removed from the Tetrapylon and from the nymphaeum near ‘Gaudin’s Gymnasium’,⁶⁰ and honorific portraits of renowned citizens were recarved in Late Antiquity to remove associations with the cult of Aphrodite.⁶¹ The name of the goddess and even that of the city eventually became intolerable, leading to their erasure in inscriptions. Examples include those integrated into the so-called archive wall in the theatre⁶² and the replacement of Aphrodisias by Stauropolis (City of the Cross) on the North-East Gate of the city wall, probably during or after the late sixth century.⁶³ Because Aphrodisias had been the City of Aphrodite and the largest centre for her cult in the Roman Empire,⁶⁴ the cultic associations of Aphrodite were here apparently so strong that she could not be removed from the profane sphere, so she had to be physically

destroyed. It is important to note that this was primarily the case at Aphrodisias. In a city such as Ephesus, for example, Aphrodite had not played a particular part. Among other gods, also a statue of Aphrodite remained present in the city's theatre.⁶⁵ What was regarded as acceptable decoration thus differed from location to location.

A growing Christian influence in theatres was furthermore recognisable in further modifications to the statuary record. At the theatre of Ephesus, for instance, both a male-seated statue of Demos (the people) and an Eros figure on the frieze of the stage wall had their genitals carved away.⁶⁶ Moreover, it would seem that the accommodation of the theatre in Christian society was facilitated by applying cross signs both on the outside and inside of the monuments. At the theatre of Perge, Christians left their mark in the form of at least one red Greek cross painted amid the relief figures on the *scaenae frons*.⁶⁷ Some of the renovation inscriptions at the theatre of Side were accompanied by crosses, many of the place inscriptions were preceded by crosses⁶⁸ and the arches of the theatre were decorated with crosses inside medallions at some point over the course of the fifth or the sixth century. At the theatre of Aphrodisias, prayers were carved both on the front wall of the scene building and on the theatre seats.⁶⁹ In addition, at Aphrodisias, we can witness a true overlap between a continued secular use of the theatre and a sacred Christian function. At the beginning of the sixth century, and thus long before stage shows were halted, the two rooms flanking the scene building were redecorated. The room to the north probably then served as an oratory, both private and public, as its frescoes depicted the archangels Michael and possibly Gabriel. Contemporary epigrams confirm that such depictions supported the notion that the archangel(s) would be 'present' for the viewers, thus encouraging prayer.⁷⁰ Similarly, at the theatre of Side two small chapels had been established in the eastern and western corners of the cavea. They have been connected to the martyrdom of the nine saints of Side, who were fed to the beasts during the reign of Diocletian. Whether or not this association is valid, they were again constructed before the theatre shows were halted and suggest a Christian supervision over activities taking place in the theatre.



Figure 6.4 Mutilated relief of Aphrodite from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias (photo by author, courtesy of R.R.R. Smith).

The Justinianic and post-Justinianic periods

If we are to believe literary sources, the second quarter of the sixth century was a decisive period for spectacles as imperial back-up was becoming highly volatile.⁷¹ According to John Malalas, riots in 522/523 caused Emperor Justin I to take severe measure and eventually prohibit all spectacles and banish all dancers.⁷² How serious we have to take this comment or how long-lasting the measures were is not clear since, already in 501/502, Joshua the Stylite (§46) claimed that Emperor Anastasius, on the occasion of the Maioumas festival, forbade all dancing in every city of the Empire.

Moreover, in 530 Justinian had the theatre of Antioch repaired with imperial funds, even though he had it (temporarily) closed the year before.⁷³ As seen earlier, the festival and its associated dancing obviously endured much longer. Procopius of Caesarea as well places the end of all public spectacles in the early Justinianic period and blames it to financial difficulties,⁷⁴ thereby implicitly indicating that theatres, hippodromes and circuses were at the time still being staged with local funds and were popular venues of entertainment, an impression already gleaned from Choricus.⁷⁵ Moreover, later law texts of Justinian and his successor, Justin II, refer to funds for the staging of plays and spectacles.⁷⁶

The continued appreciation for the theatre building itself is perhaps indicated most strongly by the integration of the theatres of Gaza and Neapolis on the Madaba map (Figure 6.5). This famous mosaic, dated to after 542,⁷⁷ is located in the nave of the Church of the Map at Madaba in Jordan.⁷⁸ It depicts settlements of Christian Palestine and northern Egypt, most of them identified by inscriptions, and their surrounding physical geography. The representation of a city through such iconographic media induced simplification or selection and compression of certain elements in order to produce a silhouette that would be immediately comprehensible.⁷⁹ Consequently, the vignettes of smaller sites consist of one or a few buildings, often a city gate or a church. The representations of larger cities can be very detailed and include their city walls, colonnaded streets and the city's most significant churches inside. Unsurprisingly, much attention has been devoted to Jerusalem, which, with its churches but also its colonnaded street and honorific column on the square in front of the North Gate of Jerusalem suggests that the mosaic layers were genuinely concerned with representing the city in an authentic manner.⁸⁰ Therefore, the integration of the theatre in the depictions of Gaza and Neapolis, next to the colonnaded streets and just inside the city wall, suggests that they were at the time still considered valuable monuments.⁸¹



Figure 6.5 The vignette of Gaza on the Madaba Map (photo by author).

Archaeology confirms that at least some theatres were still being repaired or at least used in the Justinianic period. However, the overall picture is as puzzling as that gleaned from literary sources. It is often not clear what happened after the latest changes. Indeed, certainly after the Justinianic period the archaeological record grows silent, meaning that the buildings could have gone out of use just a few years after the latest interventions or, conversely, could have survived for several decades longer. In some cases, material evidence points towards abandonment or conversion. Thus the orchestra of the extra-urban theatre of Shuni was encroached by an oil press in the later part of the sixth century⁸²; theatres such as that of Caesarea Maritima itself and that of Aphrodisias were turned into a fortresses in, respectively, the later sixth and seventh centuries⁸³; that of Skythopolis was encroached by a pottery workshop but only in the later seventh century⁸⁴; and so on. Even though there obviously is much work to be done here, the sudden paucity of evidence after the Justinianic period does suggest that activity had been drastically diminished.⁸⁵

Statuary

As mentioned, the statuary decoration of theatres underwent changes in Late Antiquity, which points to changed sensibilities and a desire to preserve both the theatre building and its decoration. In the second section of this chapter I will review how appreciation for statuary in general changed in the sixth century. Literary sources pertaining to the subject are largely limited to law edicts from the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and episodes in sixth-century and later Christian hagiography that overall give a very negative image of the medium. In this case, archaeology can add invaluable detail to our view on how statuary was used and seen throughout the centuries.

Statuary was a highly popular medium of expression in classical Antiquity. It was first and foremost a public art form with a social function, which could serve various uses and functions, and even possess several meanings at the same time.⁸⁶ Statuary inside a city can be roughly divided into two categories: honorific statues and reliefs and so-called 'idealised' statuary. The first included state reliefs recording the triumphs and great deeds of emperors and generals, imperial statues embodying the authority of the distant ruler⁸⁷ and portraits of local citizens representing recognition and gratitude for benefactions or public services. 'Idealised' statuary included cult statues that potentially incorporated the divine *numen*⁸⁸ and votive statues given to the deity in thanks of a fulfilled request but also the reliefs featuring on temple gables and temple friezes, and statuary and reliefs on the outside and inside of public buildings, such as theatres, monumental fountains, baths, gymnasia and so on. Especially in these monuments, pagan gods were combined with other 'idealised' figures from Greek-Roman mythology such as Hercules, Ganymede, Nike, Tyche, tritons, gorgons, satyrs and nymphs, personifications of the winds, the seasons and the city and so on. In the Late Roman period, smaller mythological statues and shield portraits of philosophers were an ostentatious display of refined taste and association with classical education or *paideia*. Though a statue by itself was, therefore, not in the first place intended to be art, this does not mean it could not be appreciated for its aesthetic qualities or that it could not be used as decoration. Moreover, we can state that the total collection of statuary in the city was aesthetic in the sense that it was an essential and integral part of the cityscape, which, deprived of its statuary adornment, would have been sensed as incomplete.⁸⁹

The fourth to early sixth centuries

By the start of Late Antiquity, such statues and reliefs were present in every thinkable building and space.⁹⁰ New honorific statues had become much rarer than in classical Antiquity and were partially replaced by two-dimensional representations on wood and mosaic, but

there are still examples of newly carved or re-carved portraits into the sixth century.⁹¹ We hear of an early sixth-century statue at Gaza, in Procopius' panegyric to Anastasius, which mentions the dedication of the emperor's statue in a public space as an expression of gratitude of the entire city.⁹² In Asia Minor, sixth-century honorific portraits are known from Ephesus; Aphrodisias; and, of course, Constantinople.⁹³ Conversely, with exception of a few smaller statuettes mainly intended for private display, pagan and mythological statues were no longer being newly produced in Late Antiquity. Moreover, the existing record was being thinned out throughout the centuries. On the one hand, statues were lost because of accidents or earthquakes. On the other hand, selective adjustments were already made in the late fourth century, when pagan statuary became a pressing concern of the imperial government.⁹⁴ For example, a decree of the year 399 stressed that the status of every individual statue needed to be investigated and 'idols' taken down.⁹⁵ This is likely to have affected primarily statues in a temple context, especially cult statues, which without exception had received sacrifice and had been worshipped in the past.⁹⁶ In addition, statues that received worship had to be removed from the baths and 'the favourite haunts of the public' in order to prevent further veneration.⁹⁷ At Gaza, we hear of one such statue in the hagiographic *Life of Porphyry*, who was bishop of the city between 395 and 420.⁹⁸ The *Life* tells of a naked statue of Aphrodite standing on an important crossroads in the city, which is being worshiped by the female population of the city. The demon dwelling inside it supposedly cannot stand the sight of the cross and causes the statue to fall down, killing a worshipper in the process and injuring a second.⁹⁹ Although it is highly unlikely that this event took place exactly as it was described, and although the story probably reflects the mentality of the sixth century rather than the early fifth century, the writer of the *Life* confirms that such a statue was conceived of as offensive by Christians, both because it was an idol and because it had 'all her shame uncovered'.

Naked statues indeed were more problematic than dressed ones and would remain so throughout Antiquity.¹⁰⁰ This taps into a wider discussion on bodily impropriety in early Christian times. Thus, early Christian authors were opposed to mixed bathing, and propagated sexual shame and avoidance of temptation in general.¹⁰¹ But, opposed to what we read in literary sources, nude statues were not all destroyed. They could also be re-carved to adjust them to Christian notions of nudity and the human body. We have already seen how naked depictions in the theatre of Ephesus at an unknown moment in time were 'updated' to fit Christian standards. Examples of such modified statues have been found in multiple bath buildings in Asia

Minor and Cyprus.¹⁰² In the East Baths of Skythopolis as well, a naked statue of Aphrodite with vandalised breast and pudenda was found, as well as a Dionysus of which the face had been hammered and the genitals hammered away.¹⁰³ Although such statues are especially numerous in bath buildings, they turn up in fountains, theatres, bouleuteria and other public buildings.

Consequently, although a lot had changed already, at the start of the sixth century there was probably still a sizeable collection of older traditional statuary left in the cityscape. Appreciation for such statues was changing though. The updated statues of Skythopolis were taken down before 515/516, when the East Baths were overbuilt by a new structure.¹⁰⁴ The Aphrodite was left in the hypocaust of the caldarium together with a semi-nude nymph, both of them headless at the time of their deposition. The Dionysus was found in the eastern portico of the baths. In the building's cold water bath, another group of broken statues, among them a statue of Heracles, Apollo or Hermes and Leda and the Swan, were found in a pit in one of the supporting vaults. Their deposition led Yoram Tsafrir to conclude that 'the great majority of freestanding sculptures were discarded around 515/6'.¹⁰⁵ There is not much other dated evidence to support this conclusion, first because the number of statues recovered from archaeological sites in the Roman Near East is very small. Although this may be connected to strong iconoclastic feelings already in late antique and Early Byzantine times, it is much more likely that it is a result of the fact that these cities remained inhabited also after Antiquity and that monuments with statuary were exposed uninterruptedly.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, in 720/721, Caliph Yazid II issued an edict that representations of living creatures should be destroyed.¹⁰⁷ Second, the statues that have been discovered were published without a detailed stratigraphical analysis,¹⁰⁸ making it very difficult to discern what has happened to them. Consequently, when it is reported that a Hermes statue was found in pieces near the scene building of the theatre at Skythopolis and that it has 'suffered iconoclastic defacement', there is no way to say when or why this happened and who was responsible.¹⁰⁹

Whether or not statuary survived also in the Roman East in larger numbers than is generally suspected today, traditional iconography was without any doubt still thriving in the region, but mainly in two-dimensional media, in mosaics and paintings that were still newly laid in the first half of the sixth century.¹¹⁰ Examples at Skythopolis entail a famous mosaic with Tyche, the city's personification, from one of the rooms of the Sigma plaza along Palladius street, created c. 506/507.¹¹¹ Personifications of cities were found in the corner of the Hippolytus mosaic at Madaba (Figure 6.6).¹¹² There are several fifth- and sixth-century mosaics from the Near East depicting the adventures

of ancient heroes and demigods; Dionysus and his enthusiast entourage (*thiasos*); or scenes from myths, such as that of Aphrodite and Adonis or Phaedra and Hippolytus.¹¹³ According to Procopius of Gaza, a public building at Gaza was decorated with a cycle of paintings based on this story of Hippolytus as well as with scenes from Homer's *Iliad*.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, the patron of the painting is said to be both a generous benefactor, responsible, among other things, for organising races in the circus, and a pious Christian.¹¹⁵ Procopius furthermore described a mechanical clock with the 12 labours of Herakles and Helios figures on display in the city centre,¹¹⁶ whereas John of Gaza described the series of allegorical paintings applied inside the winter baths of the city in 536.¹¹⁷



Figure 6.6 City personifications depicted on the Hippolytus mosaic at Madaba (APAAMEG_20101008_DLK-0002 © David L Kennedy, Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East).

The Justinianic and post-Justinianic periods

Despite a continuity in two-dimensional media and all the uncertainties surrounding statuary in the Roman Near East, the discard of the statues at Skythopolis does seem to reflect a more general change in mentality that became apparent by the start of the sixth century and was fully reflected by the Justinianic period. Statuary was disappearing from public monuments elsewhere in the East as well. For instance, imperial portraits on display in the basilica of Ephesus ended up in foundations around 500.¹¹⁸ Privately owned

collections, including portraits and mythological statuettes, although previously displayed in the relative safety of private villas, found their way into walls or foundations or were thrown into pits or wells. This happened to several statues and reliefs in Athens around 530,¹¹⁹ as well as to the philosophers' portraits at Aphrodisias, that were around this time discarded in an alley behind the house in which they had been originally on display.¹²⁰ Even the magnificent collections built up during the fourth and early fifth centuries at Constantinople began falling apart under Justinian.¹²¹ It was also the period (529) that Justinian had the philosophical school at Athens closed.¹²² Justinian would send out John of Ephesus to convert pagans still present in the hinterland of western Asia Minor in 542 and launch two more conversion campaigns in 545/546 and 562.¹²³ Over the course of the sixth century Christian iconography supplanted traditional and until then highly popular themes, such as Dionysiac imagery, and Nike/Victory in media, such as mosaics and pottery.¹²⁴ However, it must be mentioned again that many theatres, fountains and bath houses were found with an elaborate statue collection.¹²⁵ Consequently, a change in sensibilities and tastes did not immediately elicit violent destruction but rather caused statues to no longer be repaired when they were damaged nor re-erected when they fell down or when their surroundings experienced a new building phase.¹²⁶ In practice, when the baths at Skythopolis were closed, no one felt the need to redistribute their statues over other locations in the city.



Figure 6.7 Small-scale Hygieia put on display on the colonnaded street of Sagalassos in the sixth century (courtesy of the Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project).

And yet, as with theatres, this development was not univocal. There are some tantalising examples of enthusiastic reuse of statuary even in the full sixth century, suggesting that statuary was not entirely superfluous. First, at Aphrodisias a water basin reaching a length of c. 50 m in front of the East Gate of the South Agora was decorated with reliefs depicting scenes from an Amazonomachy, Centauromachy and Gigantomachy. The reliefs, which were not reassembled in the correct order, were separated by pillars with Eros figures.¹²⁷ A careful analysis of the entire South Agora has now made it possible to re-date the huge water basin from the middle of the fifth century to c. 518.¹²⁸

Second, at Sagalassos (a town in *Pisidia*) a collection of small-scale statues, including a statue of Apollo, at least two and maybe even four statues of Hygeia, the Three Graces as well as an Aphrodite,¹²⁹ were put on display on top of statue brackets in the main colonnaded street of Sagalassos in the second quarter of the sixth century (Figure 6.7). They may not have been in perfect condition anymore when they were moved here and the end result looked very unclassical, but it was still very reminiscent of the statue brackets in the grandiose Roman colonnaded streets of Syria and Cilicia.¹³⁰ Third, although statuary seems to have lost some of its appeal at Constantinople, literary evidence suggests that Justinian at least still valued the medium and used it to enhance the appearance of the city, redistributing the statues that once stood on the Augusteion at Constantinople to other locations in the city, applying effigies of philosophers and gorgoneia to the Chalke Gate of the imperial palace and adorning a colonnaded court at the Baths of Arcadius with ancient statues.¹³¹ Fourth, at Caesarea Maritima, the statue of Caesarea's Tyche was placed on top of a high sandstone base in a courtyard of an unidentified public building.¹³² Finally, the most discussed example of sixth-century statuary reuse is that of the two colossal seated statues found on the so-called Byzantine Esplanade of Caesarea Maritima, which probably functioned as a kind of shopping centre. They were moved here sometime between 546 and 606 by the Father of the City (*pater tēs poleos*) Flavius Strategius (Figure 6.8).¹³³ To the east of the entrance to the esplanade, the famous red porphyry figure of Emperor Hadrian, probably the cult statue from the city's temple of Hadrian, had been re-erected. To the west another emperor or god, in white marble, had been placed.¹³⁴ The statue of Hadrian did not fit the granite throne he was seated on, and, moreover, makeshift bases and odd bits of stone were used to prop the statues up where parts of the original sculpture were missing. The manner in which they were installed can be considered typical for the sixth century, when statues still in existence had already been damaged; matching elements could no longer be found; and, consequently, classical aesthetics was broadening.¹³⁵ Similarly, as mentioned, the late display at Sagalassos was rather unusual as well and the reliefs at Aphrodisias were no longer positioned in their correct position.¹³⁶



Figure 6.8 Two colossal seated statues on the Byzantine Esplanade of Caesarea Maritima (courtesy of Troels M. Kristensen).

Although archaeological examples of such active usage of statuary are limited to only three cities, it is probably no coincidence that in every case they were connected to more sizeable infrastructure works undertaken in this period. In other words, had the larger interventions not been dated to the sixth century, we probably would not have realised that something had happened to these statues at such a late moment in time since their reuse and relocation was not commemorated in inscriptions.¹³⁷ Moreover, as I have mentioned in the introduction, there are still grave difficulties where dating is concerned, and it is very likely that there existed many more other, comparable interventions that we just do not (yet) recognise.

Why these examples of statuary reuse took place so late in time remains unknown. The examples of Caesarea Maritima have been discussed on multiple occasions and have mostly been interpreted negatively, mainly because they were all missing their heads when they were found.¹³⁸ It has generally been assumed that they already were headless or were decapitated when they were put on display in the sixth century, so that they were incomplete, could be shown to be entirely harmless and could maybe even be derided by the now Christian population.¹³⁹ However, when exactly decapitation took place is entirely uncertain and it could equally have happened much later in time. Moreover, the Tyche was found in three pieces that could not be fitted together, indicating that fragments of the statue were indeed taken away after it had toppled over. As Kenneth Holum

has remarked, the statues at the Byzantine Esplanade lack a specific iconography or identifying inscriptions, so there is little reason for the sixth-century population to be reminded of pagan gods and take offense.¹⁴⁰ Suffice here to say that the possibility that they were merely intended as embellishment therefore remains very plausible. Conversely, the statue of Tyche was still clearly recognisable, with or without the head. Sixth-century city-dwellers, even Christians, had no reason to deride the personification of their city. On the contrary, these personifications remained popular in the Byzantine Near East, at least in two-dimensional form, and testify to a continuing urban identity and pride.¹⁴¹ Since another marble Caesarea Tyche as well as other statues were reused in a late sixth-century or early seventh-century defensive structure, it can be safely assumed that such statues had been part of the cityscape of Caesarea until that time and not just to be derided by Christians.

A more positive interpretation has also been given to the examples from Asia Minor. Pascale Linant de Bellefonds has proposed that the scenes of the Amazonomachy, Centauromachy and Gigantomachy reused at Aphrodisias possessed a political meaning in their original context and were intended to glorify imperial victories. It is not unlikely that this meaning was still understood as late as the sixth century and that the reliefs were still considered useful means to celebrate imperial power. Finally, the statuettes at Sagalassos were gathered on what was the main approach to the city centre. Since they would have been one of the first things to be seen by visitors, the collection of mythological statuary is best interpreted as a sign post for the city.

All examples mentioned earlier can indeed be interpreted as enjoyable items still useful for self-display, for enhancing the prestige of a location, and, in general, as indicators of the city's rich cultural heritage.¹⁴² They may even still have had a part to play in the ongoing competition amongst cities, which, as we hear from several literary sources pertinent to Gaza as well, was still very much alive in the sixth century.¹⁴³

Discussion

Even though the evidence is nowhere as detailed as at Gaza, it can safely be said that in the first decades of the sixth century at least in certain cities theatres and theatre plays had not lost their allure. Likewise, even though the attractiveness of ancient statuary was undoubtedly dwindling in the sixth century, we can now tell from the archaeological record that this evolution was not univocal and that statuary decoration could still be used to express local pride and traditions or to celebrate imperial power. The subject matter of these

statues and reliefs could be found in mosaics and paintings as well, where their popularity seems to have been even more long-lived. Clearly, the themes and stories from the pagan past still held value. It is very likely that they answered to desires and needs for which the alternatives offered by the Christian Church were not sufficient, not quite as attractive or entirely absent.¹⁴⁴ This is another discussion altogether.¹⁴⁵ Suffice here to say that a recurrent element is the joy that these ancient media gave the viewer. Beautification is one of the main reasons given to justify the reuse of statuary in literary and epigraphic sources of the fourth and fifth centuries¹⁴⁶; Choricus considers mimes valuable, among other things, because of their entertainment value.¹⁴⁷ The Christian benefactor of horse races and the mythological paintings described in Procopius' ekphrasis must have had similar motivations.¹⁴⁸ Finally, the most blatant statement is the inscription added to the mythological scenes in the fifth-century or early sixth-century mosaic at Sheikh Zuweid: 'Friend, observe here with pleasure the charming things which art has placed in the mosaic cubes ... You are one who is proud of enjoyable art'.¹⁴⁹

In order to be interpreted as such and to be acceptable to Christians, ancient depictions and traditions did require some alterations. First, in newly created depictions with Hellenic inspiration, references to cult remained absent. Instead, most depictions were decorative and narrative, with a lot of attention for the adventures of the ancient gods and heroes, showing them in actions such as hunting – a popular contemporaneous elite activity – or other mundane activities. Second, ancient Olympic gods had been reinterpreted as symbols for well-being, for the idyllic, bucolic or culture life. Dionysus is a good case in point. Dionysus and Dionysiac imagery were highly popular from the fourth into the sixth centuries on mosaics, pottery, silverware, clothing and so on.¹⁵⁰ Among the many depictions found, not a single one refers to cult practices or the biography of the god: Dionysus himself and other members of his ecstatic party such as Pan, maenads and satyrs are often depicted dancing, feasting and vine harvesting. Dionysus was no longer the god of wine and ecstasy but had long since become a symbol for conviviality and joy or, alternatively, fertility. Third, in order to clarify the assimilation and subjection of ancient divinities to Christianity (or Judaism), signs of the new religion could be added. For instance, the personifications of city goddesses in the sixth-century mosaic at the Hall of Hippolytus at Madaba all held cruciform sceptres, emphasising the Christian aspect (Figure 6.6).¹⁵¹ Crosses were incised or chiselled into the foreheads and bodies of statues in Late Antiquity.¹⁵² Interestingly, to the paintings in the winter bath at Gaza a cross apparently had been added, standing out amid the traditional iconography.¹⁵³ The

description of this cross is very reminiscent of that added to the *scaenae frons* of theatre at Perge. Finally, as discussed, a reconciliation between Christian sensibilities and the theatre and statuary had required other physical changes to take place as well, including the removal of genitalia of naked statues.

Judging by these alterations, the period from the fourth to the middle of the sixth centuries is characterised by attempts to reconcile the two traditions of Hellenism and Christianity. Although most of the research on the transmission of ancient culture so far has focussed on the elite layers of society, their education and their luxurious dwellings, the public nature of theatre plays as well as the continuous public display of statuary, the presence of mythological paintings in baths and so on ensured that city populations at large stayed in contact with ancient myths, stories, heroes and divinities in various ways.

The exact reception of classical Antiquity, however, differed from site to site. As seen earlier, in some cities theatres were abandoned already in the fourth or fifth century, and there was no evidence for late statuary displays, whereas in others continuity is much more apparent. Part of the explanation may have been the position of the site in the wider administrative structure of the Empire. From the fourth century onwards, the wealth of provincial capitals was considerably higher than that of other cities in their province, which may have influenced the upkeep of huge monuments such as theatres.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, a city with a preeminent status, commercial importance and a rhetorical school with international reputation such as Gaza presumably attracted more elite members and more money. Gaza, moreover, financially profited from the attention of Stephanos, governor of *Palaestina Prima*, who was a native of Gaza.¹⁵⁵ The most notable archaeological parallel for this situation is the city of Side in *Pamphylia*. Like Gaza, it was not the capital of the province but a major harbour city with a strong Christian presence and a self-conscious elite that invested in theatre repairs into the sixth century. Even though active preservation and reuse of statuary in the sixth century has not been recognised here, statues from classical Antiquity were discovered amid the rubble of the theatre, the city's fountains and elsewhere on the site,¹⁵⁶ reminding city-dwellers of the rich cultural past until the very end of Antiquity.

Although finances may have allowed or hindered the renovation of huge monuments such as theatres, they cannot explain why in some places statues were destroyed, mutilated or cross-marked and in others not. There are other factors at play here that we have no knowledge of whatsoever. Particular circumstances and even individuals may have played important roles in the further unfolding of a city's history.¹⁵⁷

In the case of Gaza, the mere presence of the rhetorical school probably contributed to a general philhellenic atmosphere, as its students later held high positions in civic and Christian life.¹⁵⁸ In addition, we are fortunate enough to be able to have descriptions of at least some individuals living in the city. The most remarkable figure is probably Bishop Marcian (518/519–c. 540).¹⁵⁹ Not only did he have strong family connections and cultural ties to the secular elite, he had enjoyed a classical education himself and, according to Choricus, even managed the School after the death of Procopius.¹⁶⁰ Under the supervision of a bishop like Marcian, mimes and festivals can be expected to have continued, probably in a theatre with updated statuary collection and crosses carved on the seats. Likewise, mythological statuary was undoubtedly still visible in urban space, assuming with some adjustments.

If the picture before and during the reign of Justinian is still quite diverse, after his reign our sources largely grow silent. In Asia Minor, this coincides with a general decline of the monumental city and possibly of the general standard of life.¹⁶¹ The first half of the sixth century in the Roman Near East certainly is very prosperous, with flourishing cities amid a populated and thriving countryside, and construction of fortifications, colonnaded streets and churches taking place everywhere. The data are somewhat less clear for the second half of the sixth century though. There is plentiful evidence for continued occupation, commercial and industrial activities, but public donations and civic construction become very rare, the only exception being Caesarea Maritima.¹⁶² Consequently, although the growing influence of Christianity throughout the centuries of Late Antiquity undoubtedly transformed and weakened philhellenism, it may not have been responsible for its final demise.¹⁶³ It rather seems that the entire city was changing, that city life was becoming more and more pragmatic, and that all interest in non-essential interventions or decoration – with the exception of church decoration – was lost.

Notes

- 1 The text was analysed in considerable detail in Malineau (2005). See also Tiersch (2008, 82–83).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Tiersch (2008, 68–69, 87, 91) and Drbal (2011, 119–122). See Ashkenazi (2004) for a more general co-habitation of classical heritage and Christian piety at Gaza.
- 4 For a more elaborate discussion and further references, see Jacobs (2014).
- 5 See Tiersch (2008, 75–90) on the opinions held on classical culture in sixth-century Gaza.
- 6 Grig (2013) is a very useful starting point. For Palestine see, for example, Sivan (2008) and Avni (2014).
- 7 Saradi (2006). In addition, some excellent studies have contributed to the

- reconstruction of the sixth-century cityscape of Gaza: Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2004) on Christian Gaza, Saliou (2005a) gathering all information from the writing of Choricus and Tiersch (2008).
- 8 With the notable exception of Avni (2014) who discusses archaeological evidence for sixth- to eleventh-century Palestine.
 - 9 Because of the nature of the transformations, later interventions to buildings can seldom be connected to stratigraphic deposition of sediments and can often only be dated relatively, sometimes stylistically, or not at all. This is particularly true for large monuments such as theatres, see also Puk (2014, 10).
 - 10 In the past, an absence of clearly visible and datable interventions was often interpreted as decay or decline. Alternatively, one can take the opposite approach and rely on the absence of evidence for destruction or collapse to argue for a continued lifespan of a theatre or the continued display of a statue. For example, if the last renovation campaign of a theatre can be dated to the third century and it was encroached by small houses in the seventh, it has to be taken into account that it could have been used for public gatherings until the seventh century. Although this may at times prove to be incorrect as well, the theoretical exercise leaves room for more continuity than generally is assumed.
 - 11 Other sources of inspiration were possible as well, as argued by Roueché (2009), but not as frequent as the traditional themes.
 - 12 Webb (2008, 2, 95–115), Puk (2014, 291–294) and Weiss (2014, 120–128) for the history and reception of the mimes in Palestine.
 - 13 Webb (2008, 2–4, 58–71), Dvorjetskj (2012, 95), Puk (2014, 294–296) and Weiss (2014, 128–135).
 - 14 See Sear (2006, 1–10) for an extensive description of the Roman theatre building.
 - 15 See Sear (2006, 4) for examples from Roman Antiquity. Cf. *infra* for late antique examples.
 - 16 Sear (2006, 311–312).
 - 17 *Ibid.*, 308.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 314.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, 37–42.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, 39. Political gatherings took place in larger theatres as well, already from the fourth century BC (Sear 2006, 41–42) into the sixth century AD (Saradi 2006, 315).
 - 21 The functioning, status and reception of the theatre in Late Antiquity is discussed elaborately in Leyerle (2001, 13–74), with a focus on the testimonies of John Chrysostom, Puk (2014) for spectacles in general.
 - 22 See Puk (2014, 38–39, 53–84) for an extensive discussion on imperial reactions to games and festivals from the fourth to the seventh centuries.
 - 23 Cod. Theod. 16.10.17 (399), Emperors Arcadius and Honorius to Apollodorus, Proconsul of Africa.

Just as We have already abolished profane rites by a salutary law, so We do not allow the festal assemblies of citizens and the common pleasure of all to be abolished. Hence We decree that, according to ancient custom, amusements shall be furnished to the people, but without any sacrifice or any accursed superstition, and they shall be allowed to attend festal banquets, whenever public desires so demand.

See also Cod. Theod. 16.10.3 (AD 341) in which Constantius already expressed a similar point of view.

- 24 For a general discussion, see Lim (2009, 500–501), Lugaresi (2007) and Jacobs (2014).

- 25 Leyerle (2001, 23–24), Saradi (2006, 312) and Puk (2014, 23–24).
- 26 Saradi (2006, 311–312), Webb (2008, 203–205), Andrade (2010, 176) and Puk (2014, 24–27).
- 27 Sandwell (2007, 145), Webb (2008, 201) and Puk (2014, 27–28).
- 28 Webb (2008, 202) and Puk (2014, 28–29).
- 29 Ioh. Chrys. *Hom.* 29.3 in *Act. Apost.* (PG 40.218) and *Hom. in illud: Si esurierit inimicus* 3 (PG 52.177). For the lack of enthusiasm for church visits among his congregation see *Hom. in Matt.* 37.6 (PG 57.426); *De Anna* 4.1 (PG 54.660).
- 30 Cod. Theod. 15.5.5 (425). Theodosius Augustus and Valentinian Caesar to Asclepiodotus, Praetorian Prefect:

On the following occasions all amusements of the theatres and the circuses shall be denied throughout all cities to the people thereof, and the minds of Christians and of the faithful shall be wholly occupied in the worship of God: namely on the Lord's day, which is the first day of the whole week, on the Natal Day and Epiphany of Christ, and on the east of Easter and of Pentecost, as long as the vestments that imitate the light of the celestial font attest to the new light of holy baptism; at the time also when the commemoration of the Apostolic Passion, the teacher of all Christianity, is duly celebrated by everyone.

A similar law forbidding musical performances, probably related to pantomime, was issued by Emperor Leo in 459 (Malalas, *Chronographia* 293, ed. Thurn). For a detailed discussion of official concessions and their effects, see Puk (2014, 62–66).

- 31 An extensive overview of literary sources on the content and reception of theatre plays in the sixth century can be found in Malineau (2005) and Saradi (2006, 310–319). Helen Saradi in addition discusses the financing of theatres and theatrical performances.
- 32 The spectacles at Gaza were supported financially by the provincial governor Stephanos, who resided at Caesarea Maritima but was from Gaza and therefore may have favoured his native town. Saliou (2005b, 177–180) argues that the use of the word *skènè* refers not to the stone theatre of Gaza but to another building, non-permanent, established on the agora.
- 33 Two edicts dated to the first half of the reign of Justinian (527–565) suggest that some clerics as well could not withstand the draw of the theatre: Cod. Iust. 1.4.34 (534) and Nov. 123.10 (546).
- 34 Puk (2014, 316–317) for an overview of literary sources pertinent to the Roman Near East.
- 35 Jac. Ser. *hom. de spect.*, transl. Moss (1935, 106).
- 36 Discussed in more detail in Saradi (2006, 312–313).
- 37 Shenhav (1993, 383).
- 38 Welles (1938, 470–471, no. 279). See Dvorjetskj (2012, 96–101) for the characteristics of the Maioumas festival. Other festivals attested in the region until the reign of Justinian are the *Brumalia*, in honour of the emperor, and the *Rosalia*, festivities connected to Aphrodite and Adonis (Tiersch 2008, 80).
- 39 See Dvorjetskj (2012, 101–103) for imperial attempts to constrain the Maioumas as well as Christian opposition.
- 40 Malineau (2005, 160), Saradi (2006, 317) and Dvorjetskj (2012, 110).
- 41 Dauphin (1999).
- 42 Holum (2003, 155), with footnote 14 presenting a summary of the dating evidence. Retzleff (2003, 127) wrongly dates the abandonment of the theatre to the period from the mid-fifth to early sixth centuries. Saradi (2006, 320) still

- claims that the theatre was abandoned over the course of the fourth century, which actually is the date of its last grand renovation phase. Malineau (2005, 160) cautiously assigns the fortification to the Justinianic period.
- 43 Magen (1993, 1356–1357).
 - 44 Weiss (2014, 239, 241) and Mazor and Atrash (forthcoming).
 - 45 Retzleff (2003, 122–123, 127–130), with further references.
 - 46 Puk (2014, 316).
 - 47 A summary overview can be viewed in Puk (2014, 313–315).
 - 48 For instance, the theatre of Aizanoi (in *Phrygia Secunda*) may have been abandoned already before the middle of the fourth century (Rheidt 2003, 243), and that of Priene was spoliated in the fifth century (von Gerkan 1921, 25).
 - 49 D'Andria (2003, 181).
 - 50 Jacobs (2014, 197–198, 211–212).
 - 51 Roueché (2002, 257) and Auinger and Aurenhammer (2010, 675, 688).
 - 52 Ala2004, 65.
 - 53 Roueché (1991, 107), Cormack (1991, 120) and Ala2004, 171–181, see also 184–186.
 - 54 İnan *et al.* (2000, 321–322).
 - 55 Nollé (1993, no. 149 and 152). Originally, there must have been four renovation inscriptions applied to the theatre walls. Further late antique restorations to the theatre are commemorated in inscriptions as well. See Nollé (1993, no. 145–148).
 - 56 See Lim (1999, 271–275) for the various reasons behind the organising of games by both pagan and Christian members of the senatorial elite in Rome.
 - 57 Retzleff (2003, 125–127 for Caesarea and 129 for Petra).
 - 58 For an overview, see Jacobs (2010, 296).
 - 59 Brody (2007), cat. no. 13.
 - 60 Smith (1996, 11, 25) and Brody (2007, 24).
 - 61 Originally, the statue of Claudia Antonia Tatiana, one of the many honorific statues excavated at Aphrodisias, emphasised her role as priestess of Aphrodite, an identity that was made clear by her clothing and, especially, by the presence of a young child, most likely Eros. The figure was most likely intentionally eliminated, so that the statue could remain standing without these cultic associations (Erim 1967, Fig. 7; Smith 1998, 66–67; Jacobs 2010, 280–281).
 - 62 Reynolds (1982, xv–xvii), docs. 3, 4, 8, 9, 11–13, 20 and Brody (2007, 24).
 - 63 Roueché (1989, no. 42).
 - 64 Brody (2007).
 - 65 The statues found in the theatre are described in Aurenhammer (1990, no. 5, 12, 15, 32, 34, 53, 79, 98) and Özren (1996, 126–127).
 - 66 Auinger and Aurenhammer (2010, 688). Cf. *infra* for a discussion on the perception of nudity.
 - 67 İnan *et al.* (2000, 299–300).
 - 68 Nollé (1993, 460–463, no. 143).
 - 69 Roueché (1989, nos. 137–138), (1993) 46.D.13, 46.D.16, 46.E.2, 46.E.26, 46.G.8, 46.X.15.
 - 70 Cormack (1991, 121–122) referring to an epigram of Agathias, Anth. Gr. 1.34.
 - 71 Saradi (2006, 318).
 - 72 Malalas, *Chronographia* 343–344, ed. Thurn.
 - 73 Malalas, *Chronographia* 376, 390–391, 393, ed. Thurn.
 - 74 Procop. Arc. 26.6–26.8; Puk (2014, 106).
 - 75 At Gaza, governor Stephanos still financed the theatre, see the discussion in

- Tiersch (2008, 81).
- 76 Nov. 63.1 (538) and Nov. 149.2 (569).
- 77 On the vignette of Jerusalem, the Nea Church, which was only constructed after 542, is visible.
- 78 Donner (1992), Piccirillo and Alliata (1999) and Donceel-Voûte (1988).
- 79 Duval (2003).
- 80 Pullan (1999).
- 81 Depicted is the scene building, with either the staircases or a porticus on top of the cavea (Weiss 2004, 24–26).
- 82 Dvorjetskj (2012, 108).
- 83 See note 42.
- 84 Mazor and Atrash (forthcoming).
- 85 Puk (2014, 315) suggests the theatre building at Ephesus was still functional in the early seventh century, because inscriptions referring to the Blues and Greens were still being applied at the time. They were, however, found outside the theatre and cannot be linked to the building itself.
- 86 Witschel (1995, 333) and Smith (1998, 81). For the social functions of statues, see Zanker (1987). See Bauer and Witschel (2007, 1–8) for an overview of diverse statues and their function in the late antique city.
- 87 Price (1984, 200–201) and Kleiner (1992, 6).
- 88 Belting (1994, 49–50).
- 89 See Stewart (2003, 142–143, 147–148, 154–156) for this feeling in the Roman period. For the Late Roman period, Sarah Bassett (2004, 46) phrased it as follows: ‘a larger set of late antique assumptions about the nature of cities and their appearance that saw sculpture, ancient or modern, as an essential element in the urban design’. At Constantinople, statuary remained an essential element of the city’s appearance up to the sack of 1204, see Vryonis (1991, 33–34).
- 90 On the omnipresence of statuary in the Roman world, see Beard and Henderson (2001, 83).
- 91 Liverani (2016).
- 92 Procopius of Gaza, *Panegyricus in imperatorem Anastasium*, c. 1 (p. 4).
- 93 Killerich (1993). There are no such surviving late antique portraits from the Roman Near East (Tsafrir 2008, 124–128).
- 94 Discussed in more detail in Jacobs (2010, 292).
- 95 Cod. Theod. 16.10.18 (399). Nearly all of the laws assembled in Book 16.10 of the Theodosian Code react against sacrifice but were not primarily directed towards statues or temples.
- 96 See also Cod. Theod. 16.10.19. (408) = Const. Sirmond. 12 (407) which state that images in temples and shrines that received worship had to be ‘torn from their foundations’.
- 97 Cod. Theod. 16.10.20.3 (415).
- 98 There are many problems with this text; for a recent discussion see Busine (2013, 330–332).
- 99 *Vita Porphyrii* 59–62, transl. Hill:

But when we came into the city, in the place that is called the Four Ways, there was a statue of marble which they said was a statue of Aphrodite; and it was upon a base of stone, and the form of the statue was of a woman, naked, and having all her shame uncovered. And all they of the city did honour to the statue, especially the women, kindling lamps and burning incense.

See the discussion in Lavan (2011, 443).

- 100 Jacobs (2010, 288) and Kristensen (2013, 222–224 with reference to antique authors, 228).
- 101 Brown (1988, especially 315–321) and Markus (1990, 59–61, 81–82) deal with thoughts on the human body between the first and the early fifth centuries.
- 102 Hannestad (2001), Jacobs (2010, 278–279) and Kristensen (2013, 225–229).
- 103 Kristensen (2013, 222–225).
- 104 Tsafir (2008, 134) and Kristensen (2013, 223–225).
- 105 Tsafir (2008, 138).
- 106 The effects of the continued exposure of statues have been discussed in Jacobs (2010, 291).
- 107 Vasiliev (1956).
- 108 Tsafir (2008, 130).
- 109 Applebaum (1978, 85).
- 110 Talgam (2004) and Bowersock (2006) are good introductions to the abundant mythological figures in mosaics of the Roman Near East. Bowersock (2006, 55–62) points out that the themes in these late mosaics are the same as those in the contemporary mimes.
- 111 Tsafir and Foerster (1997, Fig. 42) and Tsafir (2008, 138).
- 112 Talgam (2004, 225) and Poulsen (2004, 214).
- 113 Talgam (2004, 220–233).
- 114 Procopius of Gaza, *Ekphrasis Eikonos*, Friedländer (1939); discussed in Talgam (2004).
- 115 Talgam (2004, 216).
- 116 Short description in Tiersch (2008, 84–85), with further references.
- 117 John of Gaza, *Ekphrasis*, discussed in Tiersch (2008, 84–86).
- 118 Alzinger (1972–1975, 260–263).
- 119 Frantz (1988, 41, 87).
- 120 Smith (1990, 153–155).
- 121 Bassett (2004, 128–129).
- 122 Cod. Iust. 1.11.9–1.11.10. Watts (2004) places the closing of the school at Athens into its political and social context.
- 123 Tiersch (2008, 76–77) with extensive references.
- 124 Dionysiac imagery on mosaics of the first half of the sixth century, see Talgam (2004, 220–223); on African Red Slip Ware: Hayes (1972, 261–263) and Lund (2001, 205), on Sagalassos Red Slip Ware: Talloen and Poblome (2005, 70) and Jacobs and Waelkens (forthcoming) and on Nike: Roueché (2002, 543).
- 125 Jacobs (2010, 282) and appendices.
- 126 Bassett (2004) for Constantinople.
- 127 Linant de Bellefonds (1996) and Ala2004, 38–40. In their new location, the reliefs were placed next to each other without any obvious iconographic relation.
- 128 Ala2004, 38–40. Personal communication Bert Smith and Andrew Wilson.
- 129 Jacobs and Waelkens (2014) and Jacobs and Stirling (2017).
- 130 Jacobs (2016) and Jacobs and Stirling (2017).
- 131 See Bassett (2004, 124–128) for a discussion of Justinian's interventions.
- 132 Holum (2008, 558) suggested the building was a lecture hall, but there is not much evidence to support this hypothesis. The statue is discussed on pp. 555–558.
- 133 They are discussed in full in Holum (2008). See also Avi-Yonah (1970) and Holum (2003, 158). Kristensen (2010) discusses these statues as well as their re-display in detail. In the same city, another relocation of the statue of Tyche could

- also be assigned to the later sixth or even early seventh centuries, see Gersht (1984), Wenning (1986), Holum *et al.* (1988, 10–12) and Kristensen (2010, 276–277).
- 134 For the intolerance towards cult statues of Roman emperors, see Jacobs (2010, 288).
- 135 On the shifts in aesthetic taste in the sixth century and the reasons for this phenomenon, see Jacobs (2016).
- 136 See Bassett (2004, 130) for a diminished supply of statuary at Constantinople and Jacobs (2016) for a broadening of classical aesthetics out of pure necessity.
- 137 Jacobs (2016) on difficulties of dating.
- 138 The leg support of the Tyche as well, which was probably the personification of the harbour of the city, was discovered headless.
- 139 Tsafir (2008, 132) and Kristensen (2010, 280; 2013, 235–243), all with references to older literature.
- 140 Holum (2008, 549–551).
- 141 See Talgam (2004, 225–226) and Poulsen (2014, 209, 213–216) for examples from the Near East.
- 142 For references and discussions of ancient texts and edicts referring to these values, see Lepelley (1994), Salzman (1999, 131–132), Stewart (2003, 154–155), Schmidt (2003, 215), Saradi-Mendelovici (1990) and Saradi (1997). See Bassett (2004, 130) for an example of Justinianic Constantinople.
- 143 Saradi (2006, 62) and Tiersch (2008, 86–87).
- 144 For instance, in private contexts, knowledge of ancient myths and literature expressed in mythological statuary and mosaics was a statement of the owner's classical education, hence his status in society, wealth and prestige; see Uytterhoeven (2009).
- 145 Bowes (2011, 190) likewise explains the continuity of mythological scenes by pointing at the absence of Christian equivalents.
- 146 Jacobs (2010, 289–291).
- 147 Cf. note 1.
- 148 Cf. note 114.
- 149 Ovadiah (1977, 442).
- 150 Bowersock (1990, 41–53) explains the popularity of Dionysos in Late Antiquity. Parrish (1995, especially 332, 2004) and Stirling (2005, 87) discuss Dionysiac images in private houses. Talgam (2004, 220–223, 226–227) focusses on Dionysos in late antique mosaics. See Jacobs (2010, 287) for an overview of reinterpretations of other gods.
- 151 Talgam (2004, 225, 234).
- 152 Kristensen (2012).
- 153 John of Gaza, *Ekphrasis* 1.29–1.44; Tiersch (2008, 87–88).
- 154 Jacobs (2013, 671–673).
- 155 Tiersch (2008, 81).
- 156 Mansel (1963) *passim*, Jacobs (2010), cat. no. 27–28, 33.
- 157 See Jacobs (2010, 291) on the role of individuals in statuary destruction.
- 158 Ashkenazi (2004, 199).
- 159 Ashkenazi (2004) and Tiersch (2008, 70).
- 160 Ashkenazi (2004, 200).
- 161 Jacobs (2013, 652–655).
- 162 Avni (2014, 60–61, 98–99).
- 163 Weiss (2014, 250) considers the influence of Christianity the sole cause of the end of spectacles in Palestine.

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Town and gown in the orations of Choricus of Gaza

Fotini Hadjittofi

Introduction

Choricus, the student and successor of Procopius at the chair of rhetoric in Gaza, has left us a number of works, which can largely be divided into two categories: we have, on the one hand, encomiastic orations (panegyrics, funeral orations, wedding speeches) for prominent members of Gazan society, and, on the other hand, a number of declamations, that is, rhetorical exercises or display speeches, closely connected with the activities of the school.¹ While scholars have mined the first group of orations for historical information on the local landscape, society and institutions,² the declamations, delivered in a persona different from that of the orator himself, and dealing with mythological and historical themes or with stock questions (based on standardised imaginary scenarios), have so far attracted very little attention, seen as essentially extraneous to contemporary debates.³ But as the cultural movement sometimes called the ‘Third Sophistic’ is becoming increasingly visible in late antique literary studies,⁴ Choricus is also beginning to receive more attention, not only as an important source for the late antique urban and social landscape of Gaza but also as an educator and a literary artist who shapes the intellectual and literary landscape of his native city in particular and the Greek East in general.⁵

This chapter will take into consideration works from both categories, aiming to examine how Choricus represents Gaza in the entirety of his oeuvre, not in terms of its physical landscape but as an ideal intellectual space: a privileged city of learning, a peaceful and calm environment in which ideas can be exchanged and where town and gown not only coexist harmoniously side by side but are also mutually supportive. There would be, of course, significant limitations in attempting to trace the real Gaza in both categories of works: the encomiastic orations are prone to blatant exaggeration, while the declamatory genre posits a fictitious universe, which can only obliquely refer to (or comment on) contemporary reality. The porous boundary separating fact and fiction, historical author and speaking

persona (in the declamations) or reality and hyperbole (in the encomiastic orations) frustrates a straightforwardly historicist reading, but at the same time allows us to look beyond historical facts and into the ideology of peace and harmony, galvanised in the School of Gaza. Choricus will be seen to place a strong emphasis on the Gazan officials' skills in the non-violent resolution of conflicts, with the orator (an ideal version of whom appears in the declamation analysed later) as the natural champion of the reconciliatory power of speech.

Whether or not Choricus' representation of Gaza as a peace-loving city has some basis in historical reality is a moot point⁶; what is important for the purposes of this chapter is that Choricus considers promoting the values of peace and reconciliation as one of his main duties as the city's leading teacher and orator. This attitude, it will be suggested, is a corollary of his belief that the power of speech (and especially refined, rhetorical speech) and diplomacy is superior and much preferable to military might, and, consequently, that even military men should use persuasion, instead of violence, whenever possible. The orator and teacher of rhetoric thus emerges as a powerful figure himself: a type of hero at the service (and occasionally also the rescue) of his city, and, at least if we believe Choricus' own self-promotion, the guarantor of his city's well-being and prestige.

Praising Marcian – and all of Gaza

Two of Choricus' encomiastic speeches, *Oration*s 1 and 2, delivered in praise of Bishop Marcian, have for a long time been studied by literary scholars as well as art historians and archaeologists since they include lengthy and detailed descriptions of significant urban landmarks.⁷ The first *Oration* (or *First Panegyric for Marcian*), delivered in 535–536, praised the bishop for having constructed or renovated the church of St Sergius, while the second was delivered sometime between 536 and 548 upon the inauguration of the church of St Stephen.⁸ Apart from providing *ekphraseis* (i.e. detailed descriptions) of the two churches, Choricus mentions a number of other urban features, such as the *agora*, porticoes, bathhouses, walls and fortifications – all in connection to his objective of lauding Bishop Marcian, credited with either commissioning new edifices or otherwise improving on the built environment of the city. While the information Choricus provides on the physical and urban landscape of Gaza is indeed invaluable, what is significant for the purposes of this chapter is Choricus' construction, in these speeches, of Gaza as the ideal city and its inhabitants as the ideal citizen body. Choricus' classically framed praise of the city, whose urban space is 'updated' and Christianised by its bishop, endows Gaza with the prestige of the great centres of Hellenism. As Choricus' classical and erudite rhetoric is brought to bear on a

landscape that must have looked increasingly unclassical,⁹ the efforts of the rhetor in providing vivid and lasting pictures of the new buildings (and the people who commissioned and used them)¹⁰ should be seen as parallel to those of the bishop, although perhaps running to different directions: while Marcian renews and, in a way, modernises Gaza, Choricus invests it with the glory of classical antiquity in language carefully calculated to evoke the glories of the classical past while not conflicting with his audience's Christian beliefs.¹¹

An important element in the self-definition of the educated elites in the late antique Greek-speaking world was their sharing in *paideia*, that is, classical education and culture. While the knowledge and emulation of the classical past is a theme that runs through all of post-classical Greek literature, Gazan authors seem particularly concerned with how they measure up against the glories of classical antiquity, especially that of democratic Athens.¹² In a number of passages Choricus compares and contrasts his contemporary, sixth-century CE Gaza to fifth-century BCE Athens, conceived as the pinnacle of Greek literature, philosophy and civilisation in general. Perhaps surprisingly for a modern audience, the comparison always works in Gaza's favour.¹³ In the *Dialexis*, that is, the preliminary talk, which Choricus delivered before his *First Panegyric for Marcian*, the orator speaks of the festival that has brought all the citizens of Gaza together, and in the context of which they celebrate the new (or renovated) church of St Sergius. What comes naturally to Choricus, as a post-classical man of letters, is to reach back to the classical past and look at how the present festival compares to those of ancient Greece:

Now at Sparta, when the Hyacinthia is celebrated – for the citizens of Sparta honour the youth [Hyacinthus] – a chorus of individuals of the same age as the honourand sing to the accompaniment of lyre and pipe, and maidens dance to the rhythm of the song; for people who live a martial life are not well versed in celebrating by means of oratory. But here, my friends, we follow both the pleasant practices of Sparta and the more lofty ones of Attica. We do not imitate the orators of Athens in this respect though: it is not our custom to speak charming deceits to our audiences, but we follow the facts wherever they lead us; among us, anyone who flatters would find himself on the defensive.¹⁴

(*Dialexis* 1.4)

In this passage Gaza outbids both of the ancient Greek iconic city-states, Sparta and Athens, which represented two different cultural paradigms. Gaza is superior to Sparta, because Spartans are only soldiers, who do not know how to celebrate with oratory (Choricus'

disparagement of the martial life is a theme which will reappear), and it is even superior to Athens, because Gazan oratory is (claimed to be) honest. Choricus' need to validate Gazan intellectual and cultural life through comparison with the classical past is in itself significant, but what is striking here is that Choricus puts Gazan supremacy down to a selection process (as opposed to uncritical emulation), through which Gaza's cultural and intellectual life combines the pleasant practices of the Spartans (dance) with the lofty oratory (but not flattery) of the Athenians. The idea that authors and readers should select elements from within the classical literary tradition which are appropriate – or merely acceptable – in terms of Christian morality is a frequent theme in late antique theoretical discussions on the enjoyment and creation of literature (and echoes of it are found in the *First Panegyric for Marcian* itself).¹⁵ It is still remarkable, however, that Gaza should be represented here as having the collective wisdom, as a citizen body, to imitate those aspects of classical Greek lifestyle(s) which are still considered suitable and pleasant, while rejecting what contemporary mores would see as objectionable. The advantageous comparison of Gaza to Athens and Sparta re-emerges within the text of the *First Panegyric for Marcian*:

Furthermore, in Athens it was considered shameful to walk in festal processions and revel without a mask, and the festivals of the wisest men consisted of obscene jokes for each other; but *our* [festival] will not need such covering. For we do not show off to each other with impudent tongues, while **propriety** shines forth in even the most waggish of citizens, so that even if someone appears in the middle of a gathering with a threadbare garment he does not seem to deviate from prescribed behaviour. The Spartans are also said to have celebrated their festivals with decorum, and did not allow anyone to enjoy too much licence on the occasion, on pain of suffering the greatest punishment according to the law. But since **propriety** is present among us naturally, we do not need the instruction of the law.

(*Laud. Marc.* I 91–92)

In its obvious exaggeration, Choricus' speech goes beyond praise for the bishop or even for the city and its new edifices and advertises the festival and the behaviour of all Gazan citizens. Gazans are collectively declared more decorous than 'the wisest men' (the ancient Athenians) and more self-controlled than the most disciplined Greeks (the ancient Spartans). The Athenian festivals are unacceptable in terms of contemporary morality, because they included obscene jokes (a reference to Old Comedy),¹⁶ while the decorum of Spartan festivals

was, in a way, false or merely superficial, as it was enforced by law. Both ancient Greek paradigms are at least partly rejected, and Gazans are said to prevail since they have propriety (*to semnon/semnotês*) as an innate quality, meaning that, even in the absence of law (or appropriate clothing!), they are able to self-police their behaviour.¹⁷ In the *Second Panegyric for Marcian* the same theme gets a new twist:

The four festivals formerly famous throughout Greece, always presented competitive contest, and divided the spectators among those who were competing and, inciting their hearts to anger, caused irreconcilable animosities. In our festival, though, the quarrelsome contests and the common cries and vulgar dancing appropriate rather to performances of Dionysus, all [these] are shunned.

(*Laud. Marc.* II 70)

Here, the Gazan festival is praised not only for its propriety (in not including vulgar spectacles)¹⁸ but also for shunning precisely the element that was at the heart of classical Greek festivals: competition. Regarded by Choricus as divisive and disruptive, contests are rejected since they cause the objectionable emotion of anger, which, in turn, causes ‘irreconcilable animosities’.¹⁹ As it will be seen later on, for Choricus, very few things are deemed worse than an animosity which is beyond reconciliation. Whether reflecting historical reality or not, Choricus shows that one of the qualities he most values in his city’s intellectual and cultural life is its lack of conflict.

Academic life in Gaza according to Choricus

The values of peace, harmony and propriety are also at the heart of Choricus’ representation of how the Gazan School is run. In the *Funeral Oration for Procopius*, his old teacher, Choricus claims that disorder and confusion gripped the Athenian assembly when Pericles was absent, ‘but at the first sight of his appearance, the assembly was transformed. But you would see Procopius’ flock retaining the same decorum whether or not Procopius was present, because good conduct had been firmly implanted in them’ (*Or.* 8.6). Again, the Athenian paradigm is crucial since the excellence of Procopius as a teacher has to be read against the legendary statesman Pericles and his command over the Athenian assembly. And yet again, the Gazan ‘assembly’ (this time, specifically, Procopius’ students) outbids the Athenian, for Gazan students have decency and good conduct ‘rooted’ in them (*ἐρριζωμένης τῆς εὐκοσμίας/errizômenês tês eukosmias*), and do not require constant supervision, contrary to the Athenian citizens.

Even if we take what Choricus says of the Gazan School with a

pinch of salt (as we should since, after all, this is a funeral eulogy), it is telling that Choricus insists on the students' good conduct and decorum. At the very least, if there had been student riots or brawling on Gaza's streets, Choricus would not be emphasising this aspect. Late Antique 'university cities' in fact often suffered from the antics of disorderly students. Fourth-century Athens is a particularly notorious example: an economically depressed city, whose only world-class industry was its School, attended by wealthy (mostly foreign) students, who would habitually riot through the streets.²⁰ Libanius, the famous orator from Antioch who went to Athens to study rhetoric as a young man, mentions in his *Autobiography* (*Or.* 1.21) everyday skirmishes and a 'great battle' in which almost all students participated.²¹ The teachers were often involved in, if not motivating, these violent incidents, and they were certainly behind the forcible recruitments of new students immediately upon their arrival – a 'custom' imposed on Libanius himself.²² In one of his *Letters* (*Ep.* 715.3), Libanius says that he saw many students bearing scars from wounds inflicted in the Lyceum and opines, '[Athenian] teachers hammer out (i.e. educate) soldiers rather than orators'.

Himerius, a contemporary of Libanius and a teacher at Athens, also indicates that brawls and riots had become an expected part of the Athenian student experience, even though he does not seem to approve of the violence. Several of his *Orations* are addressed to rebellious students, who skip lectures because of their involvement in violent conflicts.²³ Among these, *Oration* 16 is significant in that it presents the orator's speech as a drug or remedy, able to eradicate the strife and intense emotions which have taken hold of his students: 'sweet and all-wise speech, which, like a drug, is able to extinguish emotions that swell up from the depths of the heart' (*Or.* 16.1). Himerius is, in fact, an important precedent for an idea that Choricus also seems to espouse (as will be argued later on): that oratory has the ability and duty to extinguish passions, and that the successful orator (and especially teacher of oratory) should be able to bring an end to conflict.²⁴

References to student violence or brawling are entirely absent from Choricus' oeuvre, and although this does not necessarily mean that his representation is accurate, it could be significant that, in his *Dialexeis* ('preliminary talks'), which abound in information on school life in Gaza,²⁵ the descriptions of incidents happening in or outside the classroom often involve dissenting opinions but never mention open conflict. There is only one episode in which Choricus seems to have felt threatened. In *Dialexis* 5.4–5.6 the orator says that his students often asked him to declaim, but he kept postponing his performance because he wanted to gather together the right audience,

those 'knowledgeable about eloquence'. At some point, Choricus finds himself surrounded by a crowd of young men asking him insistently to declaim, and each one appearing more eager than the other.²⁶ Choricus asks them not to get too 'pushy' or, literally, 'full of rashness' (θράσους/*thrasous*). As soon as they hear the word 'rashness', they elbow each other, whispering, 'This fellow seems to be a coward'. Choricus feels stung by the remark and decides to present his speech.²⁷ This is the most violent behaviour that Gazan students can exhibit, at least according to the evidence we have in Choricus, and even here the suggestion of violence (or merely rashness) could conceivably be an indication of the students' keenness to listen to and learn from their teacher, thus ultimately reflecting well on Choricus' own skills as a declaimer.²⁸

Other incidents described in the *Dialexeis* show that, occasionally, aspects of Choricus' performances came under criticism, but this was voiced in a more or less civilised way, and Choricus presents himself as addressing all censure successfully. *Dialexis* 17 introduces the second half of Choricus' *Declamation* 8, titled 'A Spartan Citizen'. Choricus explains that he was forced to interrupt his performance the previous day, because the speech was too lengthy, and his voice, as he says, 'refused to minister to his zeal'. The audience, which apparently included not only his students but also a 'crowd' of other men, got up in the middle of the speech and left the theatre.²⁹ Now Choricus is walking home, and his students escort him, as they usually do, when one of their friends walks up to Choricus, and accuses him of not being laconic while declaiming on a Laconian theme, and of forgetting his Homer, who had praised the Spartan Menelaus for speaking briefly and clearly.³⁰ Choricus defends himself by citing an episode from Thucydides (4.15–4.22), where the Spartans sent an embassy to Athens and spoke at great length, because the situation required it. The conclusion is that, Choricus says, 'I seemed to get my point across to that fellow. He went off nodding his approval and allowed me to bring you the remainder of my oration'. Choricus always has the last word (after all, it is only *his* words that we have access to), but, tellingly, what seems to win the argument for him is his erudition and inventiveness in answering those who challenge him, as the whole debate is carried out on the level of allusions to classical literature (his detractor brought up Homer; Choricus countered with Thucydides).

Similarly, in *Dialexis* 8 we learn that Choricus' audience took offence at one of his Homeric quotations. When, in the wedding speech he had delivered for one of his students, the *Epithalamium for Zacharias*, Choricus compared himself to Eumelus, quoting *Iliad* 23.536 (where Eumelus is called both last and best), the next day he was accused of self-importance. In this *Dialexis* he sets forth to defend

himself against this charge, pointing out that his reference was only to the fact that he had been late but also expounding on the Homeric line and exhibiting his knowledge of other, more appropriate literary figures to whom he would have compared himself, had he really wanted to claim he was the best speaker (the Sirens, Pindar and Nestor). Choricus, however, is careful not to appear entirely dismissive of his audience's criticism, as he approvingly mentions Plato's words 'that a few men who are good at listening to orations are more intimidating to a person who comes forward to speak than an ignorant mob of auditors from the agora' (4).³¹ It appears that, although he parades his own learning as superior, Choricus considers (or flatteringly claims to consider) his audience as capable of the kind of learned criticism which could potentially embarrass an orator.

Pacifist oratory?

While Choricus seems to welcome (and, indeed, actively seeks out, as he says in *Dialexis* 5) those members of the audience who are knowledgeable enough to challenge his speeches, he repeatedly and vocally expresses his opposition to those whose lack of gentleness and education might actually destabilise Gazan society. Even on the level of literary criticism, Choricus argues that anger and discord have no place in society, and Homer should have thought better before placing the wrath of Achilles right at the beginning of the *Iliad*.³² But, of course, what mostly concerns Choricus are the real threats to the peace and stability of Gazan society: in the *Second Panegyric for Marcian*, the bishop is praised for having brought under control some uncouth soldiers stationed near Gaza as well as those Gazan citizens who were willing to team up with them:

When the Emperor decided to chastise some rebels by war, the forces which he sent from there had to pass by [here]. They were more tolerable than [regular] soldiers, since they were held in check by imperial orders, but soldiers nevertheless, having coarse minds, tongues which outrun their intelligence, and right hands that outstretched their tongues. Thus, the city was being aroused by fear and disturbed by the announcements from neighbouring cities [...] And some [of the soldiers] were streaming here [into our city] and became bolder towards us than when they had mistreated our neighbours [...] But this noble guardian of our city [Marcian], considering and accomplishing everything which was advantageous, having separated from the inhabitants those whom he saw disposed in a friendly manner toward them [the soldiers] for their own profit, greatly softened their spirit and tamed them.

(*Laud. Marc.* II 23–24)

Conflict resolution skills seem to run in Marcian's family: in the *Funeral Oration for Maria*, the bishop's mother, Choricus reports a series of letters sent by Maria to one of her sons, who was a city magistrate, asking him to intervene in the bitter quarrel between two individuals, and 'requesting a settlement advantageous to each of them' (Or. 7.20).³³ And while Choricus praises the saintly Maria for her meekness and simplicity, and implies elsewhere in the oration that she had not received classical education,³⁴ it is interesting that her reconciliatory efforts are executed precisely through letters, which, on the one hand, would allow Maria to mediate in a less visible manner but, on the other hand, presuppose a certain level of formal education and are indicative of the importance of education in the resolution of conflicts. Now, Marcian, who had studied at the Gazan School together with Choricus, and who may even have served as head of the School for a short time after Procopius' death and before Choricus took up that role,³⁵ was obviously and emphatically an educated man, one whose rhetorical and diplomatic skills could soften spirits, and tame the uncivilised men who have not been touched by *paideia*.³⁶ For this is how the soldiers are represented by Choricus: their minds are unrefined, their tongues outrun their dim intelligence (they speak before they think – the polar opposite of the orator) and their hands outstretch their tongues.³⁷

Choricus' disparagement of the martial life has as a consequence that, even when he speaks in praise of military commanders, he is anxious to point out that his honorands are not *just* capable of martial feats but also of gentleness, mildness and persuasion. In his *Panegyric for Aratius and Stephen* (the first a military commander, the second a governor), Choricus says that in the case of the two men, the naturally opposite characteristics of high-spiritedness and gentleness are reconciled, so that even within their souls there is no conflict.³⁸ Over the course of the panegyric, Choricus will praise the commander, Aratius, for dealing with an uprising by the Samaritans without resorting to physical force or the use of arms.³⁹ The same theme comes up in his *Impromptu Panegyric for Summus*, where the general Summus is praised for achieving peace between two enemy tribe leaders, *not* through arrows and spears but by persuading them to come to an agreement and end their seemingly 'interminable' strife. Choricus underlines that, contrary to the felicitous, permanent outcome brought about through Summus' persuasion, a victory won by arms would only create a very temporary and fragile peace: 'any disagreement would threaten the peace. For whatever is without good will and persuasion is rotten and faulty and fades away after flourishing for a short time'.⁴⁰

The importance of rhetoric and persuasion in ending strife and

creating peace and stability is brought out in one of Choricus' declamations as well. *Declamation* 12 is based on an imaginary scenario: we are in an unnamed, fictional city, in which a law stipulates that the citizen who has brought a war to a successful conclusion can claim for himself whatever prize he pleases.⁴¹ When this imaginary city was under siege, a professional orator went out alone and convinced the enemy to raise the siege. He now demands the reward that the law guarantees a war hero. He argues against a military man who contested granting the gift to the orator, maintaining that the law implies a hero who won by arms, not one who persuaded the enemy to take off. Choricus sets out in his *Protheoria*, the explanatory comment which accompanied the published version of the speech, how the speaker will portray his opponent as a stock character from comedy: the boastful soldier.⁴²

You can find a model from comedy of how a military man is full of himself and a swaggerer and a great boaster. If any of you remembers Menander's character Tharsonides, he knows what I mean. [...] And 'The Hated One', of course, became the title for the play about Tharsonides.

(*Protheoria* 1)

[The speaker will be] both making fun of the soldier in an ironic way and disparaging him, and treating his irritability as comic and gently deflecting the abuse coming from him. It is appropriate, I think, for him to achieve a characterisation of the opponent as irascible and coarse and to present his own manner as mild and kindly, his professional skill making each appear as such.

(*Protheoria* 8–9)

Choricus' comments on how the character of the imaginary military man will be constructed reflect his own low opinion of soldiers as uncouth and irascible,⁴³ while the orator's mildness and kindness showcase the power of rhetoric to both create and represent such desirable attributes. Choricus admits that he was attracted to the cause of the orator, his fellow practitioner, as he knows more about public speaking than about fighting,⁴⁴ but there are more ways in which Choricus' speaker reflects the opinions and experiences of his author. One of the points he makes against the military man is that if the enemy had been defeated by force, they would soon take up arms again, because 'hatred festers, and the hostilities grow again from a small incident of strife' (73); however, as the speaker has persuaded them that lifting the siege would be to their own advantage, 'they will not alter what benefits them nor want to bring upon themselves suspicion of dullness of mind by seeming to have raised the siege

because taken in by me' (75). The definite, 'once and for all' conclusion of hostilities through diplomacy, as opposed to the fragile nature of military victories, is an argument Choricus himself had used in the *Impromptu Panegyric for Summus*. Later on, Choricus' speaker rebuffs the accusation of being a coward, which is precisely what Choricus' students had said of him in the incident described in *Dialexis* 5. Addressing his opponent, the speaker says:

You want yourself to be regarded as a brave fighter, one of the ancient crop of celebrated heroes, while you regard me as both cowardly and timid, the way you people who are practiced in warfare usually belittle those who are continuously trained in speaking. At that moment the orator, trembling at the thought of battles, saved the hero, the soldier. For you were, as it happened, carefully hidden somewhere, but I released both you and the city from the fears that surrounded us.

(*Declamation* 12.107–12.108)

Throughout the speech a lot of emphasis is placed on the paradoxical nature of the event that saved the city: that the orator 'would go unarmed among heavily equipped enemies, would enter their camp, and would drive them all away by the force of words' (34). In a highly florid speech attributed to the personified enemy city and reserved for the end of the declamation, the orator's victory is presented in terms of almost impossible antithetical pairs: 'One man has prevailed over my whole army, a man untrained in battle defeating a trained force, an unarmed man defeating a heavily armed force' (121).⁴⁵ And while these rhetorical paradoxes would seem to suggest that the heroic performance of the orator, executed solely through speaking, should probably belong in the realm of fiction, Choricus' praise of military commanders for achieving lasting peace through diplomacy indicates that the theme of this speech might be closer to Choricus' Gaza than the timeless, non-descript declamatory framework would suggest.

Does this mean that all the opinions expressed by the 'Orator' of *Declamation* 12 should be attributed to Choricus himself, and would that make him a pacifist?⁴⁶ Although Choricus' comments in the *Protheoria*, as well as indications within the text, would encourage us to merge author and speaking persona, it should be kept in mind that declamation is a genre which posits an autonomous, imaginary world; the persona of the 'Orator' should, thus, be seen as a fantasy version of the author's self-image, not his exact reflection. When the speaking persona says that, far from being a coward, he is able singlehandedly to save the city, this daydream only partly corrects the stereotype of the 'bookworm' orator as a cowardly man: in real life, it is still

military commanders and civic officials who confer and negotiate with enemies. The orator's contribution is that he has taught those military men and officials the skills to argue and persuade, and, perhaps, has instilled in them the values of peace and reconciliation.⁴⁷

Similarly, what is presented in the *Declamation* as a reality for the speaking persona is not necessarily so for Choricus. The gift which the speaker requests from the city is one that, he claims, will benefit the city by creating more men like himself:

What then do I seek? That your sons attend my school to be educated as orators rather than soldiers. For I am pained when I see so many young men going on military campaign, whereas the number of those devoting themselves to Hermes and the Muses is small.

(*Declamation* 12.116)

The speaker's complaint is attributed by Litsas to Choricus himself, and once turned part of Gaza's reality, it is then explained by the over-recruiting of young men necessary for the military campaigns of Justinian.⁴⁸ While, surely, Choricus would like to see more students enrolling at the Gazan School, it does not necessarily follow from the speaker's statement that the study of rhetoric in Gaza was neglected by young men, in favour of pursuing military careers. Nor can the modern label of 'pacifism' be applied without qualifications to Choricus. While Choricus' ideal city would probably have more orators and fewer soldiers, it is doubtful whether he (or anybody in his time) would seriously argue that all a city needs is orators.

Choricus' oeuvre poses several restrictions in the attempt to draw definite conclusions about the relationship between town and gown in his contemporary Gaza: the obvious exaggeration of the encomiastic orations and the fictional background of the declamations impose limits that are difficult to overcome. Our most reliable guide is definitely the *Dialexeis*, which provide a precious glimpse into Gazan academic life and seem to portray a peaceful environment, where criticism is welcome, and debates are carried out in a civilised way. Whereas in the Athens of Libanius' time students enrolled to become orators and ended up being trained as soldiers, as Libanius claims, in Choricus' Gaza even military commanders behave as orators and often rely on their negotiation and reconciliation skills. Choricus' conception of the ideal city, as can be gleaned from both the encomiastic orations and *Declamation* 12, places a high value on the absence of violence and conflict, and highlights the role of rhetoric in achieving this ideal. A successful orator, such as Choricus' fictional 'Orator' of *Declamation* 12 or his own teacher Procopius, becomes a

prized asset for any city,⁴⁹ while his role and functions in Christian society gradually come to approximate those of the bishop. Notice, for example, how the ‘Orator’s’ feat in confronting the soldiers who threatened his city and convincing them to withdraw is reminiscent of Marcian’s ‘taming’ of the soldiers causing turmoil in Gaza in the *Second Panegyric for Marcian*. The example of Procopius, said to use his rhetorical skills for the benefit of the weaker members of society, once again shows that an orator was increasingly required to use his speech to alleviate the suffering of others and drive them towards the right path, away from sin.⁵⁰ The academic gown in late antique Gaza gradually morphs into the cleric’s robe,⁵¹ since both orator and bishop work for the benefit of the city, averting wars and conflicts, and using their classical erudition and rhetoric to extinguish passions.⁵²

Notes

- 1 This is not to say, of course, that the declamations were only performed in a school setting; in fact, there are indications that at least some of these speeches were delivered in front of a wider audience; see n. 29. On the performance context of the declamations, see most recently Lupi (2014). As for the *Defence of the Mimes*, a text which apparently fits into neither of these categories, I agree with Westberg (2010, 142) in considering it a quasi-declamatory exercise. Translations of Choricus used in this chapter will be taken (and occasionally adapted) from Penella (2009) for the declamations and preliminary talks and Litsas (1981) for the encomiastic orations.
- 2 For two early examples see Abel (1931) and Litsas (1982).
- 3 Penella (2009, 1–8) highlights the timeless quality of the declamations and concomitantly underplays their relevance for their contemporary context (1: ‘we might plausibly imagine them to have been composed in any century of the Roman Empire from the time of Augustus on’; 8: ‘have no connection in theme with the real world that their author inhabited’). On the contrary, Greek and Roman declamation of the early Imperial period has often been read in connection to its historical context and its importance for the formation of an elite masculine ideal; see, for example, Gleason (1995) and Gunderson (2000, 2003). Historicising readings of Choricus’ declamations are all very recent: see Ventrella (2014), Tomassi (2015) and Hadjittofi (2016).
- 4 The term ‘Third Sophistic’, coined by Pernot (1993, 14, n. 9) to describe the renaissance of Greek rhetoric in late antiquity, has recently come under criticism; see the discussions in Quiroga (2007) and Van Hoof (2010).
- 5 For Choricus as a literary artist see Webb (2006), Greco (2007, 2014), and Hadjittofi (2017).
- 6 Schouler (2005, 117) and Manzione (2014, 195–196) point out that the majority of Choricus’ declamations have war as their background, which could be indicative of the absence of peace in the Gazans’ daily lives. Greco’s (2011) study of Choricus’ encomiastic orations concludes that the values praised are those of peace, harmony and order, ‘the greatest expectations of any troubled society’ (116). For a representation of Gaza as a society in turmoil and plagued by religious conflict see the *Vita Porphyrii*, whose fictitious date, however, is the fifth century CE. On the other hand, Walmsley’s (1996) historical and archaeological overview suggests a surprising level of stability and urban affluence in the cities

of Palestine and Arabia between the fourth and sixth centuries.

- 7 See, for example, Mango (1972, 60–72), Saliou (2005), Stenger (2010) and Polański (2011).
- 8 For the specific dates see Saliou (2005, 172). The two *Orations* are henceforth abbreviated as *Laud. Marc. I* and *Laud. Marc. II*.
- 9 See Jacobs (in this volume) on the transformation of the built cityscape in late antiquity.
- 10 Choricus mentions explicitly, in *Laud. Marc. I* 16, the future readers who will have access to his text but will not have seen the church he is about to describe. Greco (2011, 99–101) discusses this passage and its Platonic undertones. Choricus is also explicit about the power of his words to ‘build’ the church of St Stephen: in *Laud. Marc. II* 59 he declares that the church is also ‘constructed’ by him, ‘not by means of stone and wood, but through those things that we know how to work’. On the orator’s metaliterary claim on the power and authority of his words see Hadjittofi (2017).
- 11 Ashkenazi (2004, 207) argues for the harmonious coexistence in Gaza of ‘sophists and priests, Hellenistic heritage and Christian devotion’. For a significant revision of this picture see Stenger (2010), who suggests that Choricus has to tiptoe around the Christian sensitivities of his audience and that he avoids calling for an unqualified acceptance of classical myths and *paideia*.
- 12 On the civic patriotism of intellectuals from late antique Syrian and Palestinian cities, and how this was expressed in terms of competitive Hellenism, see Geiger (2014, 58). For Aeneas of Gaza’s assertion that ‘the Academy and the Lyceum are among us’ (in *Ep.* 18.8–18.9) see, most recently, Champion (2014a), who uses this quote in the title of his article, as well as Stenger in this volume. For a detailed analysis of the Gazan thinkers’ confident transformation (and adaptation to Christian standards) of classical philosophy see Champion (2014b).
- 13 This is not actually as surprising as it might seem: late antique orators do not shrink from proclaiming as superior to Athens the contemporary cities which they praise; for an example see Himerius’ encomium of Constantinople in *Or.* 41.3, with the comments in Hadjittofi (2014, 236–237).
- 14 I have adapted Penella’s translation to reflect the emendations of the Greek text suggested by Corcella (2008, 450), which I find convincing. Corcella (2014, 20–21) revisits this passage, with further comments on Gaza’s *Überbietung* of Athens and the combination of seriousness and playfulness in its cultural life.
- 15 For a prime manifestation of this theme in a Christian author see Basil of Caesarea’s address ‘To young men, on how they might derive profit from pagan literature’ (especially paragraph 4). The idea is not exclusively Christian, however, as precedents can be found in pagan moralising texts, such as in Plutarch’s ‘On how a young man should study poems’ (*Moralia* 14.12). In the *First Panegyric for Marcian*, Choricus’ praise of the bishop’s education highlights his discernment in reading classical literature:

while still a young man he culled the most beautiful things from the poetic [Muse], gathering on the one hand whatever was useful, and smiling on the other hand at the stories, believing that they had been made by the Homerids for profitless merriment. (*Laud. Marc. I* 6)

For a nuanced analysis of this passage see Greco (2007, 109–117).

- 16 This does not necessarily detract from the admiration Choricus expresses for Athenian festivals elsewhere: in *Dialexis* 22.4, for example, he approvingly mentions an ‘Attic’ annual festival, in which orators gave rhetorical displays and actors put on ancient plays before an audience very ‘fond of listening’, to whom

the Gazan audience is implicitly compared. In this passage, Choricus claims that his Attic *paideia* compels him to observe Attic practice. For the Gazan audience's 'big appetite for oratory' see *Dialexis* 9.1. For Choricus' education under Procopius as taking place 'in Attic meadows' see the *Funeral Oration for Procopius* (8.1.1).

- 17 The idea that a man's character can be entirely independent from his outward appearance (and especially his clothing) is recurrent in Choricus (it appears in *Declamations* 3 and 11 as well as the *Defence of the Mimes*) and might have something to do with certain strands of Christian ideology, expressed mostly in popular stories about saints and martyrs, which dismiss dress as a reliable indicator for the condition of the inner self; see Hadjittofi (2016).
- 18 Corcella (2014, 28–29) points out that it is strange for Choricus, the author of the *Defence of the Mimes*, to speak against dancing and Dionysiac performances, and suggests that this *Oration* must have been delivered at a time when civic authorities (maybe even Marcian himself) had intervened to suppress some such spectacles, perhaps pantomimes (a genre more closely linked with dancing than the mime, which Choricus had 'defended'). On the important place of spectacles in the social life of late antique Gaza see most recently Weiss (2014, 230–235).
- 19 For the increasing emphasis on anger control in both Greek and Roman philosophical discourses see Harris (2001). For the Church Fathers' condemnation of anger as sinful see Sorabji (2000, 391–393) and Kalimtzis (2012, 143–150). Gregory of Nyssa, for example, states that indignation and anger must 'be as watch-dogs to be roused only against attacking sins' (*On Virginity* 18.3).
- 20 See Watts (2006, 25, 42–46), who notes that, even though '[b]y the end of the fourth century, student violence had become a major problem in educational centres throughout the empire', the situation in Athens was uniquely grave, forcing teachers, even those who held publicly funded positions, to teach in their own homes (43).
- 21 Student violence and other deviant behaviour was acceptable (and even honourable) in certain contexts, and as Watts (2005, 237) puts it, 'students arrived at school expecting to live according to a different set of values', which would integrate them in the scholastic group – seen as largely independent from the rest of society and governed by its own set of rules. Libanius himself admits that he was expecting to take part in violent activities and blow all his money away (*Or.* 1.19).
- 22 In *Or.* 1.16 and 20 Libanius recounts how he was kidnapped at the quayside, got cooped up in a cell about as big as a barrel, was not allowed even to catch a glimpse of the teacher he had wanted to study with (Epiphanius) and was forced to enrol under Diophantus, whom he clearly wanted nothing to do with.
- 23 See *Or.* 16 'From the extempore oration given when discord arose within his school'; *Or.* 65, addressed 'To those involved <in> a conflict and absent from a lecture'; *Or.* 21 'To the newly enrolled Severus who had turned his attention to a conflict'; and *Or.* 66 'An extempore speech to some students who seemed to be rebellious'. *Or.* 69, a 'Discourse delivered after his wound healed' implies that Himerius was physically attacked by his envious enemies (69.2: 'envy's fight against eloquence'). These speeches are translated by Penella (2007) in a chapter titled 'In and Around Himerius' School'.
- 24 On Himerius' awareness of the social and political value of his speech see Hadjittofi (2014, 243–244). By contrast, Libanius' *Declamations* 3 and 4 (featuring Menelaus and Odysseus as speakers arguing for the return of Helen) suggest that, on the one hand, speech has some potential to resolve conflict, but, on the other hand, given the audience's knowledge of the ultimate failure of both speeches,

- this potential is severely limited; see Penella (2011).
- 25 On the authenticity and place of the *Dialexeis* within the Choric corpus see Telesca (2011–2012, 89–93, 97–100). On the information they provide regarding the performance of Choricus’ declamations see Lupi (2014).
- 26 The word used (φιλονεικότερος) has connotations of not only eagerness but also rivalry and aggressiveness. Words from the same root are used for the two individuals quarrelling in *Or.* 7.20, to be discussed later (φιλονεικούντων ἀλλήλοις [...] τὰ τῆς φιλονεικίας).
- 27 This ‘preliminary talk’ introduces *Declamation* 1.
- 28 *Dialexis* 16 corroborates this point, as it mentions and answers his students’ persistent requests that he declaimed more often.
- 29 The evidence of this *Dialexis*, therefore, suggests a public performance of *Declamation* 8. On the likely composition of the ‘crowd’ (ὄχλος) see Lupi (2014, 14–15).
- 30 The reference is to *Iliad* 3.214–3.215. *Dialexis* 23, delivered before the second half of *Declamation* 10 (‘Patroclus’), also addresses a member of the audience who had criticised Choricus for the length of his speech.
- 31 See Pl. *Symp.* 194b6–8.
- 32 *Or.* 13.4:

I wish that discord would disappear from among the gods and from among men, and I blame the poet [Homer] that he neglected this, and that he described in the prelude of his poem [the *Iliad*] the wrath of Achilles, although I see that sometimes it [wrath] can become the motivation for good things’.

Cf. Greco (2014, 243, n. 22). For Christian attitudes towards anger see n. 19.

- 33 I thank Jan Stenger for reminding me of this passage.
- 34 *Or.* 7.20: ‘a truly simple woman and full of meekness’ (ἀπλῆν ὄντως γυναιῖκα καὶ πραότητος γέμουσαν). Earlier in the speech, in paragraph 4, Choricus says that Maria embodied the ideal of womanhood as presented by Sophocles, although, of course, she had not read Sophocles.
- 35 See Litsas (1981, 12), based on an admittedly vague reference in the *Funeral Oration for Procopius* 50.
- 36 For Choricus’ portrayal of Marcian as a man well versed in classical literature see Greco (2011, 100–103).
- 37 ‘Their hands outstretching their tongues’ is most probably a reference to plundering (‘taking before they ask’) but could conceivably be interpreted in a more general way, as taking action before any discussion or consultation.
- 38 *Or.* 3.8:

Yet, it seems to be natural that gentleness and spirit contradict each other, so that even Socrates is, I think, clearly puzzled as to where he might find a character which is at the same time mild and magnanimous, because it is naturally difficult for the one to coincide with the other. But in your case, both of them dissolve their quarrel and are reconciled.

The ‘you’ here is plural and refers to both men.

- 39 *Or.* 3.13.
- 40 *Or.* 4.19. Westberg (2010, 71–76) analyses these two speeches together under the telling title ‘Give peace a chance: Choricus’ redefinitions of war and courage’.
- 41 Russell (1983, 22) calls the imaginary city which provides the background for many Greek declamations ‘Sophistopolis’ and points out that this city bears some resemblance to classical Athens: it ‘is a democracy, where the rhetor – both political and expert in oratory – is something of a hero’; this observation is

- especially relevant here. The law on the war hero's prize is not historical but appears in Choricus' *Declamations* 5, 11 and 12, and with a variation (referring to a tyrannicide instead of a war hero) in *Declamation* 7. On this theme in Choricus and in other authors, both Greek and Roman, see Manzione (2014, 182–195).
- 42 On the authenticity of the *Protheoriae* see Penella (2009, 16, n. 71), with whom I agree that the personal nature of the remarks would make any possible frauds (which I do not consider likely) very disappointing.
- 43 Cf. *Dialexis* 9.3–9.4, where the god of war himself, Ares, is ridiculed by Choricus as unattractive, arrogant and always frowning; even if he tried to smile at his beloved, Aphrodite, his smile would terrify rather than delight her.
- 44 See *Protheoria* 5.
- 45 Cf. the equally florid speech which the speaker attributes to the enemies' women: 'They came home because of what an enemy agent advised; they came home in numbers, having fled from one man; they came home fully armed, running away from an orator!' (65).
- 46 Manzione (2014, 196) proclaims Choricus a pacifist, following Schouler (2005, 132–133), but adding a Christian angle, attributing Choricus' anti-war mentality to his 'adesione allo spirito e al messaggio cristiano'.
- 47 For the connections between Summus and the Gazan School see Greco (2014, 243, n. 22), with further references.
- 48 See Litsas (1981, 22).
- 49 Choricus says that many cities vied for Procopius, his rhetorical skills arousing 'passionate competition among the greatest cities that desire literary activities'; see the *Funeral Oration for Procopius* 12.
- 50 See the *Funeral Oration for Procopius* 22, with Westberg (2010, 110) and Greco's (2010) commentary *ad loc.*

'Many did not perceive the anguish of being orphans; to many women widowhood seemed a light thing because he alleviated their suffering. He was never defeated in the fight against some vile passion, indeed, he convinced many of those who were attached to unnatural desires to repent.

Westberg (2010, 111, 133–134) also points out the similarities between the functions of the orator and the mime, a topic too rich to be treated here, although it is relevant for this discussion that Choricus envisions the mime as providing relief from the stress and discord present in everyday life as well as in other spectacles.

- 51 According to the *Funeral Oration for Procopius* 21, Procopius was a 'priest in everything but the *σχῆμα* (*schêma*)' – a word which can refer to the priest's characteristic dress or to being ordained; see Greco's (2010) commentary *ad loc.*
- 52 I am grateful to Jan Stenger for inviting me to participate in this exciting project and to David Westberg for sending me his PhD thesis on the Gazan orators. I would also like to acknowledge the financial support of FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia – through project PTDC/LLT-LES/30930/2017.

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Ideals of education and sophistic realities in late antique Gaza

David Westberg

Discussions on late antique rhetoric are often characterised by attempts to come to grips with the broad questions of ‘break and continuity’ in sophistic culture and *paideia* in general. Studies on the ‘Second Sophistic’ usually take their endpoint sometime between 250 and 300 CE, the so-called ‘third-century crisis’, which consisted in administrative disorder and material decline after the Antonine emperors.¹ The reasons, nature and extent of this ‘crisis’ are debated, but it is nevertheless understood as decisive enough to delimit the Second Sophistic as a cultural unit and as the designation of a specific time period.² The rhetorical culture of the fourth century, following this ‘crisis’, is sometimes said to be less self-confident as the social prestige of sophists was less obvious.³ This later stage is sometimes labelled the ‘Third Sophistic’ to underline the contrast.⁴

In discussions on the character of Greek cultural identity during the first three centuries CE, the primary ideological opposition taken as starting point is often that between Hellenic identity and Roman rule.⁵ In research on the period after the third-century crisis and the Second Sophistic the contrast between Greece and Rome as a tool for cultural analysis gradually fades into the background, especially with the establishment of Constantinople as the new centre of power – in earlier scholarship marking the beginning of the Byzantine period – together with other administrative reforms.⁶ The main ideological factor perceived to bear on issues of *paideia* during the fourth century and up to the seventh is instead the gradual establishment of Christianity, replacing the contrast between Greece and Rome with one between Hellenism and Christianity.⁷

With Christianity new societal roles such as the bishop, the holy man and the monk emerge. These types have their own cultural pretensions, sometimes in opposition to and sometimes overlapping with those of older types such as the sophist or the philosopher.⁸ In the fourth century, the roles of the ‘Christian sophist’ and the ‘Christian philosopher’ were still under renegotiation, not least with respect to their usefulness in society. Explicitly pagan rhetoricians,

such as Libanius (c. 314–392/393), Himerius (c. 315–386) and Themistius (317–390), reacted to Christianity in different ways. Libanius, famously, was a friend of Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa and seems in general to have refrained from hostile engagement with Christians.⁹ Themistius has been characterised as ‘a flexible pagan’ and ‘an advocate of religious toleration’,¹⁰ while Himerius appears as more aggressive in his praise of Julian’s religious repressions. There was a variety of stances towards Christianity.¹¹

At the same time, traditional oppositions such as that between rhetoric and philosophy or the more recent one between rhetoric and legal studies were also important and often directly connected to the sophists’ ability to attract students.¹² Rhetoricians, like all other groups (and arguably even more than other groups), changed as society changed. Like all other cultural formations, they looked back at a heritage they claimed to be theirs, while constantly adapting it to new situations.

In this chapter I will discuss sophistic activities in Gaza around 500 CE, that is, in the period coming after (but also continuing) the Second Sophistic. I will begin by charting the development of Gaza as an educational centre and then move on to the ideals and places for teaching and, finally, to issues of rhetorical performance and sophistic behaviour. These issues are explicitly addressed in Procopius’ *Letters*, on the one hand, and in many of Choricus’ works, on the other hand. Especially the latter’s funeral oration on Procopius (*Or.* 7 [VIII]) and his *Dialexeis* contain reflections on the sophist’s character and duties, and on the settings and conditions for education.¹³

The growth of rhetorical culture in Gaza: educational centres, rivalry and ideal places

In the late fifth century, Aeneas of Gaza is the first tangible Gazan intellectual, after the more shadowy Zosimus, for whom the sources are unclear, though he belongs to the period of either Emperor Zeno or Emperor Anastasius.¹⁴ The decades around 500 mark the heyday of rhetorical culture in Gaza with Aeneas, Procopius and Choricus as central figures. Around them are a number of other authors whose works have come down at least partially to us. There were sophists in Gaza before this time – Libanius refers to a sophist in Gaza in the fourth century who ‘owned the city’ and also tried to attract one of Libanius’ former students.¹⁵ This unnamed sophist seems to have been the only one in Gaza at that time, however, and although he obviously offered his teaching, Alexandria seems to have been a natural place to pursue one’s education, also on the lower levels. For example, also in the fourth century, Hilarion was reportedly sent by his parents from Tabatha to a *grammaticus* in Alexandria.¹⁶ For the later period, around

500, we have names of grammarians in Gaza and sometimes extant works, like the Anacreontic poems of John of Gaza and the zoological work of Timotheus of Gaza, both of whom were grammarians.¹⁷ Other grammarians with connections to Gaza at this time are Stephanus, Alypius and Hierius, known from the letters of Procopius (e.g. *Ep.* 13), and perhaps also a certain Georgius.¹⁸ Hierius is also a testimony that Latin studies were pursued in the region.¹⁹

The central figures of the Gaza school themselves went to Alexandria for their education, at least the earlier ones, and Gaza has many times been characterised as a ‘spiritual colony’ of Alexandria.²⁰ Edward Watts has argued that there was a gradual shift in balance from Alexandria to Gaza within the time frame of three generations of students.²¹ During this time, the intellectual milieu in Gaza was consolidated and became more independent of Alexandria. The first generation is represented by Aeneas of Gaza, who went to Alexandria to study Neoplatonism under Hierocles in the 470s.²² In a letter to a certain Stephanus, now a priest, Aeneas recalls the learned discussions the two held by the Nile.²³ At the same time, he also entertains the topos of a *translatio studiorum*, not only from Athens to Alexandria but also beyond, to Palestine and Syria. In a well-known passage in a letter to his former student Theodorus, who was teaching in Smyrna, he writes,

Congratulations on your excellence of voice, because of which the children of the Athenians consider it worthy to learn to Atticise, not from their fathers, but from the Syrians. They no longer sail into the Piraeus in desire of the Academy, nor frequent the Lyceum, since they think that the Academy and the Lyceum are to be found among us.²⁴

The second generation consisted of Zacharias (‘the Rhetor’ and later Bishop of Mytilene) and Procopius of Gaza. Zacharias studied grammar and rhetoric under Sopater in the 480s, together with Severus, eventually Bishop of Antioch.²⁵ After Severus had left, Zacharias remained in Alexandria to study rhetoric and philosophy (at some point under Ammonius), before he went to Berytus to study law.²⁶ Procopius too went to Alexandria, where he won a crown in a rhetorical contest,²⁷ and Watts argues that ‘[t]he writings of Zacharias and Procopius [...] continued to be geared towards an Alexandrian audience’, although it is also clear from Procopius’ letters that Caesarea, Berytus and Antioch were important nodes in his intellectual network.²⁸

The sentimentality with which Aeneas recalled his days with Stephanus by the Nile is also echoed by Procopius, who, in a letter to Pancratius, writes,

[You] live in a city, the common mother of the *logoi*; for her the Seasons (all) longed and made a treaty regarding her between each other. Her the sea gently washes and the Nile embraces, holding her in his arms like a beloved one. And everywhere there are groves, trees and crops, and manifold charms strike the eyes.²⁹

If Procopius' activities were still carried out within the Alexandrian orbit, nevertheless, as Watts remarks, 'the pattern of discourse has changed' with more explicit expressions of Christianity and sometimes more aggressive attacks on pagan philosophy, as evidenced by Zacharias' *Ammonius* and Procopius' *Refutation of Proclus*.³⁰ Procopius also seems to have been bent on establishing local education in his native city. He took up teaching at Gaza, despite tempting offers from Antioch, Caesarea and Tyre, all famous centres of rhetorical education.³¹ If indeed he was actively trying to establish his hometown as an intellectual centre, his many complaints at others who remained in the larger centres of learning rather than bringing their acquired knowledge back to Gaza finds a context beyond that of Procopius' personal longing for absent friends and a general fondness of his native city. One example is Procopius' letter to his former student Antiochus, who had to go to Alexandria in order to study medicine and stayed there although his medical studies were finished and he had promised to return to Gaza.³² In this letter even the *locus amoenus* topos is inverted as it is played off against patriotic fidelity when Procopius chastises Antiochus for remaining in Alexandria. It is, Procopius writes, as if Antiochus is 'clinging to the land of the Lotus Eaters'³³: Alexandria is an alluringly pleasant place, but it is not Antiochus' place, and he should return to his own Ithaca.

The *translatio studiorum* seems to have been successful, at least for a while, since at this stage, according to Watts, 'Alexandrian influence diminished to the point that Gaza seems to have stopped sending students to Alexandria'.³⁴ With Procopius' pupil and successor Choricus in the third generation 'a truly independent Gazan literary culture develops'.³⁵ It may be of interest to note in this context that if Hilarion in an earlier period was sent to Alexandria, students were now instead sent to Gaza to receive their training and that Choricus had at least one Arab student, which he mentions in his *Praise of Summus*.³⁶

According to Watts's developmental scheme it is thus unlikely that Choricus ever studied in Alexandria. Renaut, though noting that Choricus never explicitly mentions it, suggests that he did on the basis of his familiarity 'with Egyptian *realia*'.³⁷ The adduced instances are perhaps indicative but not decisive. Many of the references are common topoi, sometimes found already in Herodotus, as pointed out

ad loc. in the edition by Foerster–Richtsteig (Choricus does, however, explicitly say that he visited the Feast of the River in Egypt, *Or.* 2 [II].64).³⁸ Hernández de la Fuente also suggests that John of Gaza too ‘perhaps’ studied in Alexandria but without any reference.³⁹ Finally, from a slightly older scholarly discourse, Alan Cameron may be mentioned, who in a (slightly worked up) objection against Downey’s view on Gaza as a centre for Christian philosophy remarks that the Gazan Isidorus studied in Alexandria under Damascius, whom he followed to Persia after the closing of the Academy in 529.⁴⁰

The rooting of a Gazan education more independent of its mother tree at Alexandria is reflected also in Choricus’ treatment of the *locus amoenus* topos. Choricus does not depict an ideal educational setting by the Nile; instead he places it in Gaza, with its pleasant climate; its location at the juncture of important trade routes; and, especially, its joyful and highly cultivated festivals, as described by Choricus in, for example, the final part of his first encomium to Marcian.⁴¹

The sophist’s *aretai*: teaching and performance

An idealised setting requires idealised sophists. In his funeral oration on Procopius (*Or.* 7 [VIII].7–10), Choricus remarks on the qualities of such a sophist and how Procopius matched them. The passage is often referred to and quoted snippet-wise, but since it constitutes an off-rounded whole, with the larger duties of performing and teaching set out at the beginning of §7 and then explained in greater detail in §§7–10, I shall discuss it in its entirety and use it as a backdrop for the following remarks.⁴² Thus, Choricus begins (*Or.* 7 [VIII].7):

δύο γὰρ ὄντων, οἷς ἀρετὴ βασανίζεται σοφιστοῦ, τοῦ τε καταπλήττειν τὰ θεάτρα συνέσει λόγων καὶ κάλλει τοῦ τε τοὺς νέους μυσταγωγεῖν τοῖς τῶν ἀρχαίων ὀργίοις,

There are two ways by which the excellence of a sophist is put to the test: by astounding the theatres with the intelligence and beauty of his speeches, and by initiating the young in the mysterious rites of the ancients.⁴³

The two main areas pointed out are public performance and teaching. The mystery language employed by Choricus is fairly commonly employed with reference to education.⁴⁴ But Choricus goes on to explain why it is indeed a mystagogy and why these rites are available only to a select few:

– ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ εἴτε τὴν παλαιὰν διασώζοντες παροιμίαν – χαλεπὰ γάρ φησι τὰ καλὰ – εἴτε τὴν πολλὰν ἀκοὴν ἀμύητον εἶναι τῶν οἰκείων βουλόμενοι συγγραμμάτων εἴτε τὴν

ἀνθρωπεΐαν ἐπιστάμενοι φύσιν τὸ μὲν εὐκόλως ἀνυόμενον οὐ θαυμάζουσιν, τιμῶσιν δὲ τὸ πόνῳ τινὶ κατορθούμενον ἐκεῖνοι τοίνυν ἔν τι τῶν εἰρημένων ἢ καὶ σύμπαντα ταῦτα σκοπήσαντες οὐ πᾶσι βασίμους τὰς οἰκείας προϋθηκάν τεχνας οὐδὲ παντὸς ἀνδρός, τὸ λεγόμενον, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλοῦς, ὁ δὲ φύσεώς τε ῥώμη καὶ πόνων ἐπιμελεία καθάπερ ἐκάστῳ συνεσκεμμένος ὅσα πεποίηκεν ἕκαστος, οὕτω σὺν ἀκριβεῖα τὰ πάντων ἤγεν εἰς φῶς.

– for they [the ancients], either because they maintained the old saying (for it is said: ‘the beautiful is difficult’),⁴⁵ or because they did not want the large audience to be initiated into their own writings, or because they knew that human nature does not appreciate whatever is obtained easily, but only honours that which is accomplished with toil; they – then – in consideration of either one or all of those reasons mentioned, have not made their own crafts (τέχνας) accessible to everyone, and ‘this is not’, the saying goes, ‘the sailing for every man.’ But he [Procopius], with the strength of his nature and the diligence of his toils, as if examining together with each one everything that each had written, thus with precision brought the [writings] of everyone into light.

Teaching thus includes interpretation of ancient authors (who, for one reason or another, have deliberately obscured their works) in order to illuminate and pass on their techniques and skills (τέχναι) for imitation. Choricus then continues to discuss Procopius’ teaching abilities in moving from his understanding and exegesis of the ancient authors to how he examined his students’ attempts at oratory (*Or.* 7 [VIII].8):

τὰ μὲν δὴ λεχθέντα τοιοῦτος, πρὸς δὲ τὴν τῶν νέων ἀκρόασιν ποῖός τις; οὐ λέξις αὐτὸν ἐλάνθανεν ἀλλοτρία τῆς Ἀττικῆς, οὐ νόημα πόρρω πλανώμενον τοῦ σκοποῦ, οὐ συλλαβὴ τις ἐπιβουλεύουσα τῷ ῥυθμῷ, οὐ συνθήκη τὴν ἐναντίαν ἔχουσα τάξιν τῆς εὐφραϊνούσης τὰ ὦτα. ῥᾶον ἂν τις διέλαθεν Ἀρίωνα τὸν Μηθυμναῖον ἢ τὸν Λέσβιον Τέρπανδρον ἐκμελῶς κινῶν τὰς χορδὰς ἢ περ ἐκεῖνον ἄρρυθμόν τι φθεγξάμενος.

This is how he was with respect to the things said [by the ancients],⁴⁶ but what was he like with regard to listening to the young?⁴⁷ Not a word foreign to Attic escaped his notice, not a thought that strayed away from the goal, not any syllable that damaged the rhythm, not a sentence with the opposite construction from the one pleasing the ears.⁴⁸ It would have been easier to escape the notice of Arion of Methymna or the Lesbian Terpander when striking the chords out of tune than [escaping] him [Procopius] when [one was] uttering something unrhythmical.

The Atticist ideology reflected in the passage has often been pointed out,⁴⁹ but one may also note that Attic idiom is only one aspect of good rhetorical *technē*; unity of thought, word order and rhythm are equally important for the aspiring rhetorician.⁵⁰ In any case, the attention Procopius paid to details of language comes through quite clearly. Choricus' description of rhetorical teaching as combining the analysis of canonical texts and linguistic correction is indeed basically an extension of how the art of grammar was defined. Quintilian defined grammar as 'the study of correct speech and the interpretation of the poets' (tr. Russell; 1.4.2 *recte loquendi scientia et poetarum enarratio*), and this was echoed some 400 years later by Damascius, the last head of the Academy in Athens and Choricus' contemporary, who defined it as 'the art that is founded on the exegesis of poets and the correction of Greek diction' (tr. Heath; *Suda* s.v. A 1639 (Ἀμμωνιανός) = Damasc. *Life of Isidore* fr. 111 Zintzen: τὴν ἐπὶ ποιητῶν ἐξηγήσει καὶ διορθώσει τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς λέξεως καθήμενην τέχνην).⁵¹

Here, an important distinction between 'ancient writers' and 'Attic idiom' implicit in this passage must be noted. The paradigmaticity of these two categories is of different orders, which makes the modern notion of a 'classical tradition' blunt and even misleading when applied to the active engagement with the past in Antiquity. To some degree authors like Aristides or Libanius were, on the basis of their linguistic usefulness (i.e. their command of a 'supra-historical' Attic idiom), even more 'classical' than less puristic authors of the classical period.⁵²

As for the locations where Procopius (and Choricus) initiated the young into the mysteries of the ancients, Choricus does not have anything to say. There is no evidence in Gaza for a single school building or lecture hall comparable to the *auditoria* of Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria or the lecture hall of Berytus mentioned in the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* 25.⁵³ Such institutions were rare, and lectures were usually given in the teacher's house or outdoors.⁵⁴

Renaut remarks that Choricus 'attests that the school was located in a specific building distinct from the teachers' houses'.⁵⁵ The reference is to *Dial.* 17 [XXVIII].3, in which a number of students follow Choricus to his house. They are on their way back not from a school building, however, but from a performance (τὸ θέατρον as stated in §2), where Choricus had delivered an oration until his voice failed him. The passage thus refers not to classroom teaching but to a performance before an audience (if not necessarily in a 'theatre').

The evidence for outdoor teaching in Gaza is likewise meagre. According to Champion 'Procopius writes about holding classes outdoors'.⁵⁶ He refers to *Epp.* 81, 87, 91 and 124, and to Renaut

(2007), who discussed these same references. The letters in question refer to a place called Elousa. Champion seems to have interpreted Renaut's 'a dry and sandy area by the sea but within the walls of the city [of Gaza]' as a reference to an outdoor teaching place. This is a mistake, however. Elousa (al-Khalasa) is a city about 50 km to the south of Gaza; it was quite an important administrative centre and also cherished some cultural aspiration (most famously, perhaps, it was the hometown of Libanius' teacher Zenobius).⁵⁷ At the same time, it was 'half barbarian', on the border of the desert,⁵⁸ and by the time of Procopius seems to have begun to experience environmental problems with the sand taking over.

For the strictly educational settings, where Procopius explicated the ancient authors and corrected his students' Attic, we are thus rather poorly informed. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence in the Gaza corpus for public performances of orations, declamations and poetry.⁵⁹ Of course, such performances provided important teaching occasions as well. By his public performances Procopius wanted to 'raise the young to a love of rhetoric'. This testifies both to the importance of the teacher as a role model and, somewhat less idealistic, the need for him to promote himself.

As Brown, among others, has remarked, '[n]o student ever went, as we do, to a university conceived of as an impersonal institution of learning [...] He would always have gone to a person – to Libanius, to Origen, to Proclus'.⁶⁰ The fact that a 'school' often simply was equal to a teacher is important both with regard to which spaces were used for teaching and for the *translatio studiorum* topos discussed earlier.⁶¹ When Aeneas says that Athens is now in Alexandria or Gaza, he is referring to the teaching activities of specific individuals at least as much as to educational institutions:

But you have in fact gained Athens, my friend. For if what you want to see is not so much the Acropolis nor the Propylaia nor the dockyards, but a wise man, then Theophrastus, the great glory of Athens, has docked among us and has been here three days already.⁶²

A sophist could be employed, and paid, by the city, and this seems to have been the case with at least Procopius.⁶³ But this does not automatically imply that the city provided physical or organisational infrastructure for teaching specifically. Indeed, the service that Gaza bought from the sophist may have primarily been not teaching but rather public orations and declamations for the eulogy and entertainment of its elite. The title to Choricus' *Dial.* 22 [XXXVI] speaks of an 'annual obligation of delivering a declamation', which may have formed part of the sophist's 'official' job.⁶⁴ *Dial.* 15 [XXV],

an argument that a declamation should not be left unfinished, compares the performance of a declamation with a financial debt, illuminating how rhetorical displays in Late Antiquity were quite literally viewed as ‘cultural capital’.⁶⁵ Teaching, of course, was inextricable from the activity of performance, but whether it was carried out in a ‘private’ fashion or formally included in the sophistic salary at Gaza seems less clear.⁶⁶

Performance and sophistic manners

With this, we have already begun to discuss the sophistic ἀρετή Choricus mentioned first, rhetorical performance, to which he now returns (*Or.* 7 [VIII].9–10):

ἀλλὰ μὴν ἡνίκα τὰς οἰκείας γονὰς εἰς θέατρον ἤρχετο φέρων, ἐποίει δὲ τοῦτο πολλάκις εἰς ἔρωτα λόγων ἐγείρων τοὺς νέους, λογάδα τε πᾶσαν ἐξέπληττεν ἀκοὴν καὶ τοὺς τὸν σύλλογον περιστῶτας ἐκίλει, ὥστε τὴν Ἰσοκράτους ἐν τῷ τάφῳ Σειρήνα δηλοῦσαν, ὡς ἔθελε πάντας ὁ ῥήτωρ, ἔχειν αὐτοῦ προσήκει τὸ μνημα.

But when he went to a theatre with his own creations⁶⁷ – and he often did this, raising the young to a love of rhetoric –, he both struck the entire select audience and enchanted the ones standing round the selection, so that it is suitable that his monument too has the Siren on the tomb of Isocrates, showing how the rhetorician bewitched everyone.

In this brief comment Choricus does not speak of performance as such but about the effects of performance. The successful sophist is supposed ‘to strike (καταπλήττειν) the theatres with the intelligence and beauty of his speeches’ (§7). καταπλήττειν in §7 is then picked up by ἐξέπληττεν in §9, with particular reference to Procopius’ achievements; ‘he both struck (ἐξέπληττεν) the entire select audience and enchanted (ἐκίλει) the ones standing round the selection’. The compounds with -πλήττω refer to ‘the intelligence and beauty’ of the speeches, that is, to their content, way of argumentation and linguistic form (their *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, to use their traditional labels), which only a select, well-educated audience would be able to fully appreciate. Other, less educated, citizens attending the performance, would perhaps instead, as Greco has suggested, be ‘enchanted’ by the rhetorician’s gestures and the musicality of the voice (i.e. by the *actio*).⁶⁸

Some information on details of performance can be supplemented from other instances: for example the various comments found in the *dialexeis* comparing oratorical display with dancing, singing and

acting.⁶⁹ In *Dial.* 12 [XXI] Choricus compares the declaimer with the dancer (ὄρχηστής) impersonating various roles and states that Homer likewise ‘dances’ in his poems.⁷⁰

Apart from the many instances of oratorical displays evidenced by Procopius and Choricus, some of which I have already discussed, poetry such as the poems of John of Gaza seems to have been read in public, and the same seems to apply to letters.⁷¹ Such public performance continues the practice of the Second Sophistic: ‘In every city worthy of its name, members of the male elite – grown men, and also their younger acolytes – would regularly gather to hear their peers perform oratorical declamations’.⁷² We also learn from Choricus that the performance of long orations was sometimes divided into two sessions.⁷³ The festivals at Gaza as occasions for rhetorical performance are also famous.⁷⁴ As a general trend, however, Cavallo remarks that public readings from the fourth to the sixth centuries ‘were less and less addressed to a broad audience and more often to smaller circles which obviously gathered in more confined spaces’.⁷⁵ Perhaps Choricus’ separation of a ‘select audience’ from those ‘standing round’ is a sign of this development, as well as his remark about the ‘public display’ (*Or.* 1 [I].80: δημοσίαν ἐπίδειξιν) he had delivered ‘not before two or three men, nor – in the manner of Eupolis – having brought some people from the street to the theatre, but having gathered the first among the citizens’ (*Or.* 1 [I].3–4).

Performance, then, was part of the ‘public’ side of the sophist and a way both of fulfilling his obligations to the city and of displaying his skill and thereby attracting students. A related theme concerns the image of the sophist’s personal manners and appearance, which is somewhat ambiguously presented by the Gazans. Choricus’ first encomium to Marcian provides us with a comment on good and bad sophistic behaviour. Marcian, a rhetorically trained bishop, is presented by Choricus as the opposite to the kind of sophist who beguiles his audience ‘by means of facial contractions, pretentiousness in appearance and bombast of voice’ (*Or.* 1 [I].8: προσώπου συναγωγᾷς καὶ σχήματος ἀλαζονείᾳ καὶ φωνῆς ὄγκῳ). This is a traditional caricature of sophist behaviour both on and off stage concerning ‘language, thought, manners and even dress’.⁷⁶ The oratorical performance and the general behaviour of the sophist was a welcome target for ridicule, and caricatures of sophistic pride and vainglory are legion – one of the more famous and sustained examples is Lucian’s image of the upstart sophist in the satire *Teacher of Rhetoric* (Ῥητόρων διδάσκαλος).

Accusations of typically sophistic behaviour were levelled against Procopius as well, especially it seems from his brother Zacharias, who was an advocate in Constantinople.⁷⁷ ‘Keep shooting!’ Procopius

writes in a reply to his brother's mockery. 'Call me "sophist" again and say that I love applause; and add a brow and vanity and anything you like' (*Ep.* 18.6–18.7 κάλει δὲ πάλιν σοφιστὴν καὶ λέγε κρότων ἑρᾶν, ὀφρῦν τε προστίθει καὶ τῦφον καὶ πᾶν ὃ τί σοι φίλον).

The 'brow' may require some additional explanation: the raised brow is a physical hallmark of the arrogant sophist.⁷⁸ Pliny the elder remarks (*NH* 11.51.138):

[superbia] aliubi conceptaculum sed hic sedem habet: in corde nascitur, huc [= ad frontem] subit, hic pendet – nihil altius simul abruptiusque invenit in corpore ubi solitaria esset.

Pride has its place of generation elsewhere, but here is its abode: it is born in the heart, but rises to the eyebrows and hangs suspended there – having found no position in the body at once loftier and steeper where it could be sole occupant. (tr. Rackham).

'Pretentiousness' too (ἀλαζονεία, as in the quote from *Or.* 1 [I]) is something of a keyword in this caricature of the sophist. Procopius points out (*Ep.* 18) to his brother that he (Zacharias) is getting away too easily by equating 'sophist' and pretentiousness (ἀλαζονεία), adding that his brother too then might have quite a share in this art.⁷⁹ At the same time, Procopius embraces these characteristics to a certain extent: 'You can mock these things', he writes, 'but I shall not bear not to be brilliant and carry my brow high and follow the rule of my art' (*Ep.* 46.6–46.7 σὺ μὲν οὖν σκῶπτε τοιαῦτα· ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ ἀνέξομαι μὴ οὐ λαμπρὸς εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὀφρῦν ἄνω φέρειν καὶ τῷ τῆς ἐμῆς τέχνης ἔπεσθαι νόμῳ).

Another instance of the self-irony with which Procopius could view his own profession is his use of the word φροντιστήριον. In a letter (*Ep.* 89) to the grammarian Stephanus, who had moved from Gaza in order to teach in Antioch,⁸⁰ Procopius asks for information (*Ep.* 89.7–89.9):

δῆλωσον δέ μοι καὶ ὅπως ὑμῖν ἔχει τὸ φροντιστήριον, καὶ εἰ πλῆθος ὁμιλητῶν σοι περιφράττει τὸ θέατρον, καὶ, τὸ δὴ μέγιστον, εἰ πλούτῳ κωμᾶς, καὶ σοί τις Πακτωλὸς τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπέκλυσε.

Let me know also how your 'thinking-hut' is faring, and if your theatre encloses a multitude of students, and – the most important thing – if you revel in wealth and some Pactolus has flooded your house.

The word φροντιστήριον in this passage is surely used jokingly as an intended reference to Aristophanes' *Clouds* 94 and not merely in the sense 'lecture-room, auditorium'⁸¹; also, the exaggerated 'river of gold'

is indicative of the ironical tone, and the passage as a whole seems to be a playful reference to the classical image of the rhetorical teacher as a greedy impostor (even if the underlying question ‘How are you doing?’ may be earnest enough).

The phrasing in Procopius’ letter also bears a strong resemblance to the introduction to Zacharias’ *Ammonius*, where A inquires of B how Ammonius’ φροντιστήριον is faring (*Ammonius* 27–28, φράξε δὴ οὖν ὅπως αὐτῷ τὸ φροντιστήριον ἔχει) immediately after Ammonius has been characterised as someone who is boasting about his wisdom and promising that he can make others wise as well if they attend his classes (*Ammonius* 22–24). In drawing a general contrast between Aeneas’ *Theophrastus* and Zacharias’ *Ammonius* Champion remarks that ‘Theophrastus is praised for his philosophical expertise [...], whereas the pagan philosophers in Zacharias’ dialogue are ridiculed for pomposity and stupidity’.⁸² This would be an indication of the more polemical attitude cultivated by the Gazan authors of the ‘second generation’ (as discussed earlier). Against that background one may note that φροντιστήριον does not appear in Aeneas’ *Theophrastus*.⁸³

The caricature of the sophist and Procopius’ half-joking acceptance of it in his letters contrasts with Choricus’ description of Procopius’ modesty in the funeral speech. Here (*Or.* 7 [VIII].18) we learn that

εἴ τις αὐτὸν ἐπαινοῦντος ἀκήκοεν, ἄλλοτε ἄλλην ἥλλαττε χροῖαν κύπτων εἰς γῆν καὶ στάζων ἰδρῶτα καὶ δεινῇ κρατούμενος ἀφωνία. ἐνταῦθα μόνον ἄπορος ἦν τῆς αἰσχύνης αὐτῷ τὴν γλῶτταν ἀγχοῦσης τοσοῦτον ἐπικεῖας αὐτῷ καὶ σεμνότητος περιῆν.

If he heard someone praising him, he often blushed, bowed towards the ground, perspired, and was overcome by a terrible speechlessness. Only then was he completely at a loss, as the embarrassment checked his tongue. So large was his surplus of humility and reservedness.

This contrast between ‘the brow’ and humility is brought out also by Procopius when he, in another letter, praises his brother’s modesty: though he has obtained a high position he does not ‘raise his brow’ (40.5–40.6 ἀνασπάσεις ἡμῖν τὴν ὀφρῦν) but remains modest (40.10 μετριώτερον).

We do not really have to conciliate these images. Procopius’ *Letters* and Choricus’ funeral oration – as well as his other orations, *dialexeis* and declamations – are written by different persons and with different purposes. The common ground, if it is to be sought, seems to be an expression of sophistic professional pride, perhaps verging on arrogance but also with a good deal of self-irony in combination with

philanthropy and an explicit need for the sophist to be beneficial to the community.⁸⁴ In general, the self-reflexiveness and interest in role models is evident in the writings by the Gaza sophists, especially in Choricus' works and the letters of Procopius. They present us with an image of the rhetorician navigating between practical circumstances and ideal images. He had to conform to given patterns while at the same time adapting these patterns to his own reality. In a combination of sincerity and self-irony he had to shape his own persona against inherited models and caricatures, as well as face the perennial but mundane issues of arguing for the intellectuals' usefulness, of building an educational environment, to which students should be attracted – and of keeping them.

Notes

- 1 For an overview of the political and military course of events, see Drinkwater (2005).
- 2 For example, Whitmarsh (2005, 4, n. 1; 'cultural unit'). Swain (1996, 3; a 'perceptible break').
- 3 Malosse and Schouler (2009, 163).
- 4 Explicit arguments for the term are found especially in Quiroga (2007) and Malosse and Schouler (2009); see also Amato, Roduit and Steinrück (2006). Arguments against it especially in Van Hoof (2010). See also Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2014).
- 5 The prevalence of this opposition is evident from the titles of many studies: for example Swain (1996; 'Hellenism and Empire') and Goldhill (2001; 'Being Greek under Rome'); cf. also Schmitz (1997) and Konstan and Saïd (2006).
- 6 On 'Greek identity' in both periods, cf. Mellor (2008) and Rapp (2008) in the context of the other contributions in Zacharia (2008). For 'Hellenism' and classical reception in the later period, see also Kaldellis (2007).
- 7 For a recent overview of the issue of 'the encounters of Greek literature with Christianity', see Stenger (2016); from a patristic and exegetical perspective, cf. also Young (1997) and Stroumsa (2012).
- 8 A broad view is provided in Brown (1992). For an example of redistribution of spiritual authority in Gaza, cf. Hevelone-Harper (2005).
- 9 For example, Cribiore (2013, 13 and *passim*).
- 10 Penella (2000, 3).
- 11 For a discussion of the fourth-century sophists and beyond, see, for example, Schamp (2006) and Stenger (2009).
- 12 For a discussion on the borders between rhetoric, sophistry and philosophy, cf. Dillon (2005) and, with special regard to the sophist Maximus of Tyre (i.e. probably towards the end of the second century), Lauwers (2015, 15–124).
- 13 I follow the model established in Penella (2009) of referring to Choricus' works by genre designation and number, followed by *opus* number in brackets in order to facilitate the use of Foerster's and Richtsteig's edition.
- 14 Discussion in Geiger (2013, 96–97).
- 15 Libanius, *Or.* 55.6. Cf. Cribiore (2007a, 77, 94).
- 16 Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* 2.
- 17 Cf. Szabat (2007, 188) and Renaut (2007, 171). On John of Gaza, see Ciccolella (2000, 116–173; the Anacreontic poems) and Lauritzen (2015; the Ἐκφράσις τοῦ

- κοσμικοῦ πλίντακος). On Timotheus, see Corcella (2017).
- 18 For collected information concerning these individuals, see the prosopographies in Kaster (1988), Szabat (2007) and Geiger (2013). Cf. also Kaster (1988, 107). Nine poems have been attributed to Georgius ‘the grammarian’, who may have belonged to the Gaza milieu, but the uncertainties are many. See the discussion in Ciccolella (2005).
 - 19 On Latin in Palestine, see Geiger (2013, 135–150; p. 140 on Hierius).
 - 20 From at least Schmid, Christ and Stählin (1924, 1028) to at least Champion (2014a, 33, n. 51). Cf. also Downey (1963, 107): ‘Academically, [...] an outpost of the Egyptian metropolis’; Wear (2013, 145): ‘an offshoot of the great school of Alexandria’.
 - 21 Watts (2006, 9, n. 48).
 - 22 Cf. Aen. Gaz. *Theophr.* (*passim*); *Ep.* 15.
 - 23 Aen. Gaz. *Ep.* 15; cf. Renaut (2007, 170) and Szabat (2015, 255–256).
 - 24 Penella (2009, 2, n. 5) remarks that ‘us’ here ‘surely includes Gaza, even if it also refers to Smyrna’. See also Massa Positano (1962, 106–109); Champion (2014a, 44), though the comment that the *Theophrastus* also proposes, that ‘truth has moved from Athens to Syria’, seems wrong. Euxitheus has actually sailed *from* Syria to go to Athens but accidentally ends up in Alexandria, where Theophrastus happens to be. Theophrastus comes from Athens but remarks that ‘among the Athenians, where philosophy was most manifest, it has been wholly banished and set at naught’ (*Theophr.* 4). Cf. also Watts (2004, 13) and Champion (2014b).
 - 25 Zach. VSev., introduction, 11–12, 25. Cf. *PLRE* II s.v. ‘Zacharias (the Rhetor) 4’, p. 1194–1195. See also Watts (2010, 130–131; with additional references) for an overview on Zacharias’ early education and religious development.
 - 26 Zach. VSev. 46; *Opif.* 1012, 1016.
 - 27 Chor. *Or.* 7 [VIII].15; Procop. Gaz. *Ep.* 48, 96. The data for Procopius’ biography are collected in Amato (2010b). Cf. also Watts (2006–2007, 155, n. 12) on Procopius’ ‘attachment to the intellectual culture’ of Alexandria. The lawyer Diodorus, a frequent addressee in Procopius’ *Letters*, had also studied in Alexandria (and eventually became a lawyer in Caesarea). In *Ep.* 127, Procopius recalls when they met there. On Diodorus, see *PLRE* II s.v. ‘Diodorus 3’, 359; Westberg (2017, 401); and the commentaries to the letters in Ciccolella and Amato (2010).
 - 28 Watts (2006–2007, 155). Cf. Watts (2006, 9). For the importance of contacts beside Alexandria as evidenced from Procopius’ *Letters*, cf. Westberg (2017, 401–402).
 - 29 Procop. Gaz. *Ep.* 119.9–119.12; cf. Renaut (2007, 169) and Szabat (2015, 255–256). The designation ‘mother of the *logoi*’ implies a contrast to Berytos, referred to as ‘the mother of the laws’ (τὴν μητέρα τῶν νόμων) in, for example, Zacharias Scholastikos, *Ammonius* 9, and perhaps hints at the rivalry between traditional *paideia* and the more recent professional training in law.
 - 30 Cf. Champion (2014a, 2) on expressions in Zacharias and Procopius on Alexandrian and Athenian *philosophia* as a corruptive force.
 - 31 Chor. *Or.* 7 [VIII].12–7 [VIII].13.
 - 32 Procop. Gaz. *Ep.* 104. *PLRE* II s.v. ‘Antiochus 16’, 105.
 - 33 *Ep.* 104.4 ὥσπερ Λωτοφάγων γῆς ἀντεχόμενος. In 104.10 Circe and Calypso are included as temptations for not returning home.
 - 34 Watts (2006–2007, 156).
 - 35 Watts (2006, 9).
 - 36 *Laud. Summ.* 25. In addition, Summus himself had an Arab orator, probably confident in Greek and Latin, as his advisor (σύμβουλος) in dealings with the

- Arabs. On the continuing late antique Arab Hellenism, see Bowersock (1983, 155). The Chorician passages are discussed in Shahîd (1995, 189–190) and Shahîd (2009, 78).
- 37 Greco (2010, 103) also holds that ‘probably Choricus too’ received his education in Alexandria (though her reference is to a 1954 article by Saffrey, in which I cannot find Choricus mentioned). Cf. Penella (2009, 3; with a question mark).
- 38 For the reference to the Nile’s flood in Chor. *Dial.* 22 [XXXVI].2, cf. Hdt 2.19; for the Feast of Lanterns (the *Lychnokaia*) in Chor. *Or.* 1 [I].86, cf. Hdt 2.62 and found as an anecdote also in Themistius *Or.* 4.70. In addition to the ones mentioned by Renaut, there are many other references to Egypt throughout Choricus’ works: for example the comments on Egyptian priests in the *Defence of the Mimes* (*Or.* 8 [XXXII].148–8 [XXXII].149), where Choricus explicitly refers to Hdt. (2.36) as his source.
- 39 Hernández de la Fuente (2014, 95); for a discussion on the meagre biographical data for John, cf. Lauritzen (2015, vii–xviii).
- 40 Cameron (1969, 26).
- 41 Cf. Champion (2014a, 24, n. 15). Cf. also Saliou (2005, 173–175), discussing the description of Gaza’s pleasantness in *Or.* 2 [II] as encomiastic topic. Choricus’ idealisation of Gaza creates a strong and suggestive image. Downey (1963, 113) takes it very literally in his idealising description of the importance of the physical setting for the belletristic and scholarly output: ‘The whole atmosphere of Gaza was congenial to quiet literary study. [...] The handsome classical buildings and the equable climate made Gaza an eminently pleasant residence for academic folk’.
- 42 Adduced, for example, in Browning (1997, 98), Browning (2000, 860) and Greco (2011, 104). For full translations and commentaries, see Greco (2010, 58–81, 136–198) and Corcella (2010). On the sophistic ideal in *Or.* 7 [VIII], the purpose of education and the relationship between sacred and secular learning, see Westberg (2010, 106–115), where I also compared Procopius’ *paideia* with that of Marcian in *Or.* 1 [I]; see also Stenger (2017), who discusses *Or.* 7 [VIII] in order to elucidate ‘what religious expectations Gazans had of education’ and ‘the extent to which education was a religious matter’. On the relationship between sacred and secular methods of interpretation in the case of Procopius’ exegetical activities, see also Westberg (2013) with the criticisms in Metzler (2015, xxvii–xxx).
- 43 I translate τὰ θεάτρα with ‘the theatres’, but the word must be taken in a broad sense. It often refers to the entire situation of performance and can mean ‘audience’ but also ‘performance’, ‘show’ (= θέαμα); cf. for example, *LSJ* and *BDAG s.v.*; Grünbart (2007, vii).
- 44 Immediately before, in §5, Choricus has talked about ‘those being initiated in rhetoric’. The mystery metaphor is discussed in Kaster (1988, 16). It is developed rather extensively in Him. *Or.* 54.3 (addressed to newly arrived students); cf. Cribiore (2007a, 169). The understanding of the phrase ‘dear Aristotle and the initiators of his mysteries’ in Zacharias’ *Ammonius* 10–11 as connecting Aristotelian teaching with ‘pagan religious practices’ in Champion (2014b) seems a bit too strong with regard to the diffusion of the metaphor and the context, which simply states that person ‘B’ in the dialogue has given up the study of philosophy in order to study law.
- 45 Referred to as an ‘old saying’ already by Plato (*Resp.* 435c); cf. Foerster–Richtsteig (1929) and Greco (2010) *ad loc.*
- 46 Corcella (2010, 514, n. 13) understands τὰ λεχθέντα to refer to words spoken by Procopius (“parole dette” da Procopio) in contrast to those spoken by his

students. He remarks that the aorist is odd since it must be understood to refer to a continual practice but suggests that it might reflect school jargon ('potrebbe trattarsi di espressione del gergo di scuola'). Another oddity, however, would be that Choricus has not yet commented on Procopius' abilities of oratorical performance (this comes in §9, with ἐξέπληττεν picking up καταπλήττειν in §7), and a summary of how Procopius spoke would be out of place. What Choricus has just discussed is Procopius' exegetical abilities, so I take τὰ λεχθέντα to refer to 'the things already said (i.e. by ancient orators)' in contrast with Procopius' examination of his students' speeches, to which Choricus now turns. This also accounts for the aorist.

- 47 τὴν τῶν νέων ἀκρόασιν is an ambiguous phrase, the interpretation of which depends on whether τῶν νέων is understood as a subjective or objective genitive. In their translations of the passage Litsas and Browning prefer the latter, translating 'the education of youth' (Litsas 1980, 215) and '[i]n his lectures to the young' (Browning 2000, 860). Caffiaux instead took it as an objective genitive, translating 'en écoutant les productions de ses élèves' (Caffiaux 1862, 7), as do Corcella and Greco, translating 'e nell'ascoltare gli elaborati dei giovani' (Corcella 2010, 514) and 'nell'ascoltare i discorsi dei giovani' (Greco 2010, 61). With regard to the following remarks on how Procopius corrected the Attic of these outputs, I think that Caffiaux, Corcella and Greco are correct. Their understanding of ἀκρόασις as Procopius' act of listening rather than the 'thing listened to, recitation' (*LSJ* s.v. II) also makes the singular more intelligible.
- 48 Many of the terms employed by Choricus are more or less technical and need to be investigated further in order to pinpoint their meaning in this context more precisely. I have tentatively translated: λέξις 'word', συλλαβή 'syllable', συνθήκη 'sentence' and τάξις 'construction'. See the suggestions and parallels in Greco (2010, 150–151).
- 49 For example, in Corcella (2010) and Greco (2010) *ad loc.*
- 50 The importance of prose rhythm and cadences in clause endings (observation of Meyer's law) in late ancient and Byzantine rhetoricians has been studied by Hörandner (1981; with Gaza authors on pp. 73–78).
- 51 Cf. Kaster (1988, 11); the passage from Quintilian is commented on in Ax (2011, 95–96).
- 52 This is the case also in the later Byzantine period, when, for example, Metochites rates Aristides higher than Demosthenes on account of his linguistic *usefulness*; cf. Gigante (1969). Both Procopius and Choricus were considered such useful model authors as well, cf. Amato (2009); also Westberg (2018). On the role of Atticism in sophistic culture, see Kim (2010) with references; on ancient linguistic correctness (*hellenismos*) generally, see also Pagani (2014, 2015).
- 53 For a general overview of the conditions for teaching spaces, see Cribiore (2007b); see also Saliou (2005), for a discussion on the Gaza rhetoricians relationship to urban space, and Cavallo (2007).
- 54 On outdoor teaching in the slightly earlier period and especially in Egypt, see Cribiore (2001, 26–27). It should be noted that 'outdoor teaching' is far from a unified concept, and the value or prestige of outdoor teaching varies with the setting: sitting on stones in the heat or in the turmoil of the street is a bad thing, while a silent environment under the shade of a tree provides an ideal Socratic educational environment.
- 55 Renaut (2007, 172).
- 56 Champion (2014a, 32).
- 57 See Gutwein (1981, 13–14). Sivan (2008, 77) describes Elousa as 'the capital of the Negev, perhaps for a while even of the province of Palaestina III, and a major

- station along the road between Jerusalem and the Sinai'. Cf. Mayerson (1983), who discusses the evidence for Elousa in literature from the fourth to sixth centuries. Also Garzya and Loenertz (1963, xxxi–xxxii), and Downey (1958, 302; on the addressee Jerome). The misunderstanding of Elousa as a place in Gaza perhaps derives from Litsas (1980, 45), who with reference to the same letters states that Elousa was 'perhaps a suburb of Gaza [...]', and (in note 2) located 'in a dry, sandy area with strong winds, perhaps by the sea [...] but within the walls of the city of Gaza'.
- 58 Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* 25, calls it *oppidum semibarbarum*.
- 59 Some of it is discussed in Ciccolella (2006); see also Lupi (2014). For a survey of public reading in Late Antiquity, see Cavallo (2007), and cf. Jeffreys (2006) for a wider range of genres.
- 60 Brown (1983, 2); Cribiore (2007b, 144): 'A school did not have an existence independent from the teacher, who was his school'.
- 61 Cribiore (2007b, 144).
- 62 Aen. Gaz. *Theophr.* 3.15–3.18; transl. Dillon and Russell.
- 63 For overarching discussions on the social status of teachers, including questions of salaries, 'public chairs' and the relationship between the cities and the central, imperial power regarding education, see Kaster (1988, 201–230) and Hadot (2005, 230–238). In Chor. *Or.* 7 [VIII].12 we are told that Caesarea offered Procopius 'much gold' in order to attract him there. Kaster (1988, 228, n. 136) takes this as implicit evidence that some cities paid salaries for teachers, but in the same sentence Choricus tells us that Caesarea also used force and flattery, so it should probably be interpreted as a one-time persuasion attempt rather than as a long-term salary.
- 64 Tr. with notes in Penella (2009, 54–55).
- 65 Cf. the discussion on the concept of *amoibe*, 'recompense', as 'a leading idea in Choricus' rhetorical output' in Westberg (2010, 116–119), to which this instance may be added.
- 66 Thus, I think that Renaut (2007, 172) has jumped to the conclusion that '[i]t seems logical to suppose that the city of Gaza officially appointed several *grammatici*'. Also in the following discussion she seems to assume that the city assumed a strong central role in the administration of education and the 'institutional organization of the "School of Gaza"'.
- 67 Again, 'theatre' can be understood in the loose sense. The phrase may simply mean 'when he performed his own works'.
- 68 Greco (2010, 152), *ad loc.* with reference also to Greco (2007, 103–104) with further discussion of musicality and the image of the Siren.
- 69 On evidence from especially the declamations, see Lupi (2014).
- 70 On this theme, see Hadjittofi (2017).
- 71 John of Gaza: Ciccolella (2006) and Cavallo (2007, 152). Letters: Aen. Gaz. *Ep.* 16; cf. Cavallo (2007, 153). Procop. Gaz. *Ep.* 91: θέατρον λογικὸν τὴν σὴν παρέσχον ἐπιστολὴν, κάν τῇ Γάζῃ μέση πρὸς πάντας ἐλέγετο ('I presented your letter as a rhetorical performance, and in the midst of Gaza I read it before everyone').
- 72 Whitmarsh (2005, 3).
- 73 Cf. *Dial.* 11 [XIX], probably introducing the second half of *Decl.* 5 [XX], and *Dial.* 13 for *Decl.* 6 [XXIII].
- 74 For an overview, see Litsas (1982).
- 75 Cavallo (2007, 156).
- 76 Favorinus, *Corinthian oration* 25–26 (preserved as Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 37). On Favorinus' sophistic self-presentation in the *Corinthian oration*, see Gleason

- (1995), chs. 1, 3–20.
- 77 *PLRE* II s.v. ‘Zacharias I’. See the contribution of Tiersch in this volume.
- 78 This forms part of a physiognomic tradition on which see especially Gleason (1995), Ch. 3 and the briefer discussion in Whitmarsh (2005, 30–32). Sometimes the brow is part of a physiognomic discussion of the eye as an index of thoughts and emotions, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the brow in the sense of ‘fore-head’ and the eye-brow more specifically. Here, I focus only on the raised brow as a sign of sophistic pride. See also Westberg (2017, 403–404).
- 79 On the basis of Procopius’ letters 18, 46 and 168 Ciccolella (2010, 122–123) discusses the prejudicial image of the sophist as a man of high culture but also of pretentiousness and bad taste (‘uomo di elevata cultura ma pieno di ambizione, presunzione e cattivo gusto’) and whose fame is based on the rhetorical treatment of unimportant themes.
- 80 Assuming that this Stephanus is the same grammarian to whom *Epp.* 13, 71 and 105 are addressed; see Garzya and Loenertz (1963, xxvii; ‘Étienne A’) and Ciccolella and Amato (2010, 473, n. 414).
- 81 As in *LSJ* with reference to this passage and as reproduced (including the earlier numbering of the letter (114) in Hercher, *EG*) in *BDAG*.
- 82 Champion (2014a, 54).
- 83 Instead verbs such as φιλοσοφέω (2.9–2.10) or ἐνδιατρίβω (20.11) are used. The clearly ironic overtones of φροντιστήριον also have implications for Cribiore’s discussion of Zacharias’ use of the term in Cribiore (2007b, 149), where I think ‘a place for meditation’ is misleading.
- 84 On the theme of philanthropy, which I have not developed here, and its possible relation to Christianity see Westberg (2010, 109–111), Greco (2011, 103–108) and Stenger (2017). Greco (2011, 103) sees Procopius as ‘the perfect synthesis of classical scholarship and Christian virtues’. By contrast, Stenger (2010, 2017) takes a strong stance against ‘harmonizing misconceptions’. Stenger instead emphasises classical models of philanthropy so that ‘Christian thought is “fenced in” or encircled by the classical code’. I have argued that Choricus in *Or.* 7 [VIII] underlines how Procopius puts theoretical *paideia* ‘to work’ in contemporary society by stressing its useful features: the ‘*logoi* receive their value in practical ethics’ (Westberg 2010, 110). These ethics may be specifically Christian or not, but it may also, for example, strike a blow against more narrow legal studies unable to provide the *enkyklios paideia* and behavioural models required of a good citizen. For Pericles as such a model, see Stenger (2017), for Gorgias, Westberg (2010, 112). For *vir bonus* ideals reflected also in Procopius’ *Letters*, see Westberg (2017, 404–405).

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Procopius of Gaza and the debate on rhetoric versus law in his letters

Was there a leading form of knowledge in Late Antiquity?

Claudia Tiersch

The Antiochene orator Libanius is famous for his complaints about the decreasing significance of the art of rhetoric in his time, the fourth century AD. This precious type of knowledge, so Libanius claimed, was going to lose the public reputation it actually deserved, owing to shorthand writing and law. Students aimed at obtaining those technical qualifications to secure a job in the imperial bureaucracy, rather than learning this traditional and recognised art.¹ Scholarship has shown that there is much exaggeration in Libanius' laments. There were still many students of rhetoric, also at Antioch. Libanius turns out to be a highly esteemed teacher, integrated into a dense web of relations, whose public reputation and income were excellent.² The true change was rather about a rebalancing of these two kinds of skills, which assigned judicial qualifications a higher priority because of the needs of a permanently enlarged central administration. Within this context the study of rhetoric actually became important as a first step to higher qualifications.³

But it seems worthwhile to pursue these laments from a different angle. Every society has a specific way of collecting, storing and organising the knowledge it needs to run everyday life, social relationships or public administration. In recent years a whole field of research has developed around this subject, analysing the culturally and historically specific forms of knowledge organisation (or 'ways of organising knowledge'), that is, specific knowledge cultures, be it under the label of sociology of knowledge or a culturally tinted intellectual history.⁴ For ancient history, to give a few examples, the volumes edited or written by Jason König, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Thomas Habinek and several other studies have paved the way.⁵

So the question addressed in the following analysis of a specific

example from Gaza will be how the shift between the changing positions of law and rhetoric should be assessed. The debate on whether rhetoric or law was the core of an advocate's training had a long tradition, dating from Republican times.⁶ However, a shift in priorities with regard to these two traditional kinds of knowledge seems to have taken place in the Late Roman period, although the art of rhetoric retained a certain glamour. The reasons for this should be sought not only in the changing power balance between the numerous cities and the central imperial bureaucracy that reduced the scope for local elites and local rhetors but also in an increase in the importance of judicial education for members of the imperial administration. From 460 onwards advocates listed as eligible to plead in the prefect's court were required to have certified legal knowledge.⁷ Moreover, the legal profession flourished in Late Antiquity.⁸ How did leading intellectuals of the Late Roman Empire respond to these changed circumstances?

To address this question the letters of Procopius, who lived between 465 and 524 and became one of the most brilliant rhetors in the school of Gaza, are a valuable source, and not only because he agreed with Libanius' sentiments.⁹ He turns out to be a very engaged witness, because the competition between law and rhetoric was part of his own family situation. Whereas Procopius acted almost all his life as a rhetor in Gaza and was a very creative thinker, producing theological commentaries as well as festive orations, two of his brothers, Philippus and Zacharias, succeeded as jurists in gaining leading posts in the imperial *consistorium* at Constantinople.¹⁰ In the corpus of Procopius' letters several pieces bear witness to a lively exchange between the brothers, and a recurrent theme was indeed the specific qualities of law and rhetoric. We have access, of course, only to Procopius' side of the debate, but he writes in a densely argued way that also indicates opposing arguments.¹¹

Therefore I would like to pursue the traces this debate has left in the letters of Procopius. How did he evaluate the two types of knowledge or disciplines? Did he assign a certain rank, a function, a peculiar effectiveness to each of them? Were there specific concepts closely associated with each type of knowledge, that is, a set of qualifications, values, social expectations, attitudes and stances? How could the need for both knowledge types be negotiated? I will deal with these topics under four aspects: I will consider first the debate between law and rhetoric as reflected in the letters; second, the self-definition of Procopius as rhetor; third, the world of law as seen and negotiated by him; and, fourth, I will proceed to a more general assessment of Procopius' role against the background of legal culture in Late Antiquity.

The debate between law and rhetoric

In a letter to his brother Zacharias (*Ep.* 18), Procopius, half amused and half annoyed, mentions a disturbing phenomenon: his brother's mockery of his commitment to his profession as rhetor, for Procopius at once job and vocation. Zacharias was going to scoff mercilessly at Procopius' cultural haughtiness, his stiff eyebrows and his zeal for public applause, nicknaming him a *sophistes*.¹² Zacharias, Procopius says in a somewhat disconsolate manner, never stopped piling on his mockeries, although they were unjustified and misguided. Zacharias himself enjoyed the stylistic grace of his letters and, moreover, had benefited from Procopius' rhetorical abilities many times. Only Procopius' self-restraint, appropriate to a true rhetor, prevents him from enumerating these situations. And despite his noticeable frustration Procopius proudly defends his convictions, namely his pleasure in being a rhetor.

Seen from his brother's perspective, however, an alternative picture emerges of the rhetor's significance and expertise. To sum up the verdict of Zacharias, rhetors, especially those with the cultural aspiration to be *sophistai*, were denounced by him as braggarts, full of pride and arrogance. They represented a futile form of cultural knowledge and an interest in ephemeral subjects that was no longer required, at least not as pursued in the traditional manner, because it had been superseded by more functional juridical qualifications.¹³ Moreover, this class of rhetors represented a rather elitist group trapped by their traditional pretensions, who were no longer qualified to address the needs of contemporary society and its politics. There was no longer an adequate balance between their claimed reputation and the effectiveness of their performance. Indeed, their complicated style of classical communication had to be taken as a symbol of how this kind of knowledge had ceased to facilitate political decisions, to negotiate social or political relations or to rule the new world of the Late Roman Empire.¹⁴

According to Zacharias, only a much more functional, straightforward style of collecting and applying knowledge could serve to keep the imperial bureaucracy running: exactly the kind of legal knowledge that Zacharias and Philippus represented.¹⁵ This increased assertiveness accompanied a considerable extension of legislative activities in Late Antiquity. From Diocletian to Theodosius, a period of only 100 years, we know of more than 200 laws. Marie Theres Fögen has appropriately ascribed this tremendous rise to the emperors' conviction that law-giving was able to govern the world: not only the insignificant affairs of everyday life but also state and church administration; taxes; private and public property; and the beliefs, thinking, learning and knowledge of their subjects,¹⁶ that is,

the essentials of private, public and social order.¹⁷ Seen from this perspective, imperial law-giving appeared to be the essential instrument for governing the world in future and legal knowledge the practical basis necessary for it.

Although he defends his profession and his identity as rhetor,¹⁸ Procopius is perfectly willing to praise the merits of his brothers and the careers they chose.¹⁹ However, he also often addresses them as experts in classical culture, perhaps as a reminder that they shared a common education and set of values,²⁰ and that they should not forget that rhetoric was the common basis for all culture.²¹ On several occasions he even sent his treatises to Constantinople to get his brothers' views, as well as seeking the opinion of several of his other correspondents.²² One of his letters expresses Procopius' pleasure at being congratulated by Zacharias on the quality of a book,²³ but a certain tension between the different worlds of law and rhetoric, between Gaza and Constantinople, pervades the atmosphere of the brothers' correspondence.

Moreover, similar allegations against sophists were made by other correspondents in the same corpus (cf. *Ep.* 169 and 170 to and from the young rhetor Megethius criticising the loquacity of the *sophistes*).²⁴ They obviously correspond to a prejudice which was by no means rare, as exemplified by the church historian Socrates' verdict on sophists in his own time: Socrates was ready to admire them for their classical education and their rhetorical abilities but attacked them for a lack of ethical values, presenting them as men without any deeper convictions, exclusively interested in advancing their careers – a hint, at least, that rhetoric had not become useless at all.²⁵ What arguments did Procopius have to justify his profession?

The self-definition of Procopius as rhetor

To be a rhetor was, for Procopius, more than a profession or the longing for public applause. Of course, the rhetor was very keen on his job and its opportunities to influence people: 'a good rhetor', he once noted, 'is able to induce passion in whomever he wants'.²⁶ Acting as a rhetor was, for Procopius, rather an all-embracing way of life that was completely dedicated to classical culture, embodied in the concept of sophistic.²⁷ Reading his letters one finds innumerable quotations and reflections that refer to classical myths and examples as principles by which he ordered his life, and he also advised others to behave in the same manner.

Writing to a friend who had become estranged from him after suffering something harmful, he reminded him that even Achilles had put an end to his wrath against the Achaeans after a certain lapse of time: he had reconsidered his decision and afterwards reunited with

his fellow countrymen. He, Procopius, would be extremely happy if Diodorus imitated this example.²⁸ To find a remedy against the long-enduring silence of his brother Zacharias, from whom he evidently had not received a letter for many months, Procopius first invoked Zeus as the protector of friendship, then he invoked the Erotes because they cause warmer feelings in human beings. In the same way he expressed his affliction because of the great geographical distance between him and his brothers by a forceful comparison: he wished to have the ability, like Perseus or Abaris the Scythian, to rise into the air so that he could bridge the long distance whenever he wanted. After receiving letters from his brothers he expressed his twofold joy with a classical parallel: as the people who came to Delphi used to address Apollo in their hymns, yet also included Artemis in their chants, so he could be twice happy about addressing them both.²⁹

In the same letter his happiness about the received letter is given expression in a truly sophistic manner³⁰: some other person, so Procopius says, might find real pleasure in being like Croesus and possessing comparable wealth, another in being acclaimed as 'Great King', someone else would declare that he enjoyed the spring while observing the swallows, but for him to enjoy the voice of his brothers in the form of their letter is completely sufficient; thus he can feel prouder than Croesus with all his talents, or the Great King sitting under a sycamore tree, and instead of the swallows he feels the Muses singing above him. Procopius conceded, however, that it would be better from now on to cut short his remarks so that he would not come across as a *sophistes*, overemphasising his joy, and because he hoped that all three of them, laughing about each other, could nevertheless preserve their companionship.³¹

These quotations are only an indication of how densely the world of Procopius was filled with classical culture and its values. However, his classical learning did not prevent him from being imbued with Christian thinking too.³² The two components occasionally form a fruitful combination, melding Christian ideas of the vanity of life with Stoic and Platonic approaches, his philosophy being rather a rule for living than an abstract concept.³³ Consequently, Procopius' authorship of catena-commentaries on the Old Testament as well as of discourses on spring, the roses, Aphrodite or the Phoenix each found their normative counterpart in the letters.³⁴ Without any doubt, the core motif of Procopius' world view can be seen in his classical education.

An illustrative example is offered by several letters of consolation for some of his closest friends, where he had to find consoling words for the death of children and wives.³⁵ A comparison of these letters shows that Procopius not only followed the formal rules of Menander Rhetor on how to arrange a consolatory speech – first the lament and

then the consolation – but also used the ideas given by his predecessor to make the painful events more endurable for his friends. One prevailing idea is the general futility of life and its vicissitudes. One should accustom oneself, Procopius says, to the fact that nothing in life is permanent or stable, even though human hopes aim at the permanence of happiness. Tyche is the goddess who reigns over everything; the gods have allotted fortunes to everyone without distinction and without taking into consideration the virtues or faults of individual human beings. Nothing is as permanent as in the moment of origin, and if someone has got what he wanted to have, it will have disappeared in the next moment. Human life is inevitably subject to suffering, according to the will of the gods who direct human life. Therefore it is impossible to influence one's own fate in accordance with personal intentions; one can only try to bear with stoicism the vicissitudes of life in order to retain a mind intact in spite of the changed circumstances.³⁶

Procopius even praises the ancient Greek tragedies as a means of consolation. Every possible human fate, according to his message, has already made its way into the literary and dramatic representation of tragedy, enabling readers and audience to reflect on the literary messages and their interpretations, and thereby to integrate their own misfortunes into a broader context. This shows that your case is only one among several other similar ones and that you can therefore bear it with greater equanimity.³⁷ All these letters reveal fair-minded compassion, shaped in the established forms of Christian, Platonic and Stoic ideas. Nevertheless, Procopius even in these letters seized opportunities to increase the elegance of his language, be it through alliteration, anaphora or syntactic parallels.

First and foremost, being a rhetor and sophist for Procopius meant being part of a knowledge system that he regarded as the basis for all other kinds of knowledge: he once warned his brother Zacharias not to forget that rhetoric has to be taken as the basis for everything, including prosperity and power.³⁸ This judgement did not rest only on the formal beauty of literature and speeches that Procopius ardently loved:

‘Holding your letter in my hands’, he wrote to his friend Gessius, ‘it seemed to me as if I have got the Muses themselves, and I do not know what happened to me, like the Delphians, who, seeing Apollo coming from the Hyperboreans, first fell silent, then were filled with the god suddenly. So have I admired every detail [of the letter, C.T.]: the adequacy of terms, the harmony of the links among them, the beauty that emerges in everything, and, what is greatest, your manners, from which your letter has come to me’.³⁹

Driven by the conviction that only by reverting to this well-tryed knowledge would it be possible to use the experiences of a glorious past for the challenges of an often uncertain present and future, he exclaimed, 'If only there were again the noble jury-courts, an Attic judge and the splendid glory of Athens, so that rhetoric could blossom at the height of its destiny'.⁴⁰ But it would be wrong to mistake this kind of dedication to a glorious past as an attempt simply to re-enact those cultural figurations in an obsolete manner. Procopius proves that, on the contrary, to use the treasures of classical culture correctly implies steadily reconfiguring them according to the needs of the present.

One of his most revealing and lengthy letters, *Ep.* 91 to Hieronymus, is devoted to the question of how to deal appropriately with classical culture. The starting point was a simple dispute about proper forms of address: was it acceptable to place the person who sends the greetings first and the person who receives them second, as Procopius had done, or was it a symbol of arrogance and bad style, as Hieronymus had complained, because it manifested a deviation from ancient manners? Procopius used this reproach as a starting point for a fundamental attack on an uncreative perception of the classical past. He blamed his opponent for his rigid attitude towards the classical heritage: in fact Hieronymus himself would deviate from his own elitist claims. And, above all, the lively spirit of classical culture had only survived as a result of continuous attempts in each successive period to reinterpret and even improve the knowledge achieved up to that point. Thus, for instance, Polemon of Laodicea, a famous rhetor of the second century in Smyrna, had refined classical rhetoric by purifying it of Asian extravagance.⁴¹ And with his complaints Hieronymus would even hit Socrates and Plato, because they had continuously tried to elevate philosophy, raising it to the heavens.⁴² And, Procopius asks, could Hieronymus really be sure that he would be totally free from any accusation of having used tradition arrogantly, if by chance he had lived in past times? Procopius therefore pleads with conviction for an attitude towards classical culture that honoured the vast scope of classical knowledge, not through a rigid freezing of it in place but rather through active and creative appropriation because, according to a saying of Demosthenes, acting usually comes last after speaking and voting, but in importance, it has to be considered first.

This last hint points to the real significance that permanent contact with classical culture had for Procopius because of his profession as a rhetor: it facilitated a world view that emphasised the right values – true *philosophia* instead of the constant pursuit of wealth, career, power or glory. The values associated with this world view do not necessarily include ambition for the summits of a public career in the

imperial administration but rather include a certain modesty, a love for classical culture and civic patriotism.

Therefore, what matters is not only rhetoric but a rhetoric charged with the appropriate philosophical values, which enables the rhetor and sophist to educate his audience. A letter to Megethius proves that Procopius (like Libanius) had reservations not only about the high esteem enjoyed by legal expertise, judging it too technical and specialised a form of knowledge, morally neutral and not based on ethical values. He expresses the same prejudice against forensic rhetoric, identifying it as a dangerous kind of rhetoric that declares the wrong right or stimulates unjustified hopes in people accused of crimes they had committed.⁴³ His insistence that sophistic rhetoric is a culturally and socially integrated form of knowledge which must be contrasted with legal knowledge, a disembedded, value-free art, available for manipulation to suit many contexts, recalls the complaints against the sophists advanced by Plato and several others in Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. But whereas Plato had at that time pleaded for a strict separation between rhetoric and philosophy, Procopius classified them as united and transferred the negative attitude now onto legal knowledge, putting the disembedded world of central administration, political careers, corruption and the functionally necessary *techne* of law against the integrated world of the local urban sphere, with its specific knowledge and cultural traditions. The cases made against sophistic rhetoric and against law in these different historical periods are partially comparable, because they evidently reflect social aversions in times of political and epistemic transformation.

The values that Procopius aimed at become obvious when, in a letter to his brothers, he rebukes them for an abundance of ambition⁴⁴ and connects his congratulation of his brother Zacharias on a new step in his career with a wish: he argues that Zacharias should maintain his modesty in his new office. In another letter he praises a man named Orion because he retained his modesty, in spite of his removal to the worldly and glittery setting of Constantinople.⁴⁵ Asked by a father to write a treatise for his son about the necessary virtues to pursue during the course of life, he singled out modesty as the most important virtue, one that should be applied to social relations, communication and personal behaviour.⁴⁶

An inclination against which he argued and polemicised emphatically was excessive love of wealth. A whole series of letters to a very close friend, Hieronymus, who had left Elusa, his hometown, for a better paid job in Alexandria, constantly alludes to just this issue: Hieronymus is a man very dear to Procopius, but precisely because of that Procopius is always mocking his friend's love of the abundant

monetary floods of the river Nile and its surrounding town, the wealth of Egypt being even then a commonplace. Hieronymus, so the Gazan rhetor suggests, should be grateful for his intimacy with philosophy instead of constantly chasing the wealth of Egypt.⁴⁷

How far Procopius wanted to pursue his commitment to philosophy is indicated by two letters, to his brother Philippus and to a friend, respectively, both of whom had just married. Procopius initially sent them the usual congratulations, but afterwards he changed the style of communication. The rejoicings of matrimonial life were for him a target of mockery: like the eighteenth-century mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauß, he criticised matrimonial life as an obstacle to the truly philosophical life. But he had consolatory advice for both men in their situation: after several weeks, when the desires of Eros had had time to unfold their power, life would re-enter a calmer path, and everything in their former philosophical life would run as perfectly as before.⁴⁸

Of course, Procopius never draws back into self-renunciation, asceticism or inner isolation. He expressed his happiness over presents and gifts from his friends or felt flattered by enthusiastic praise and his reputation as a sought-after rhetor, teacher and patron.⁴⁹ And his letters to superior addressees with their peculiar style of reverence and politeness present him as a self-conscious part of the social elite. However, he very often comments on his distance from the world of tribunals, administrative requirements and rules (especially in Constantinople) and his happiness at living a different life.⁵⁰ Several letters speak of appointments offered to him by other cities, all offers that Procopius declined.⁵¹ He always explained his refusal politely, in detail, but he remained firm. To live according to a proper balance of values, where cultural issues matter more than material ones, was one of the advantages of his identity as a rhetor.

Another one was the company of like-minded people, all of them connected by the same commitment to classical culture. Whether the friend lived nearby in Gaza or far away was of less importance. The letters at least partially compensated for the absence of the friend: many of them were directed to people with whom Procopius seemed to be in almost perfect harmony, men like the rhetor Hieronymus; the sophists Pythius and Dorotheus; the grammarians Alypius, Stephanus and Hierius; and the iatrosophist Gessius, with whom Procopius shared literary inclinations and cultural tastes.⁵² Thus Procopius admired the power of the words of a fellow rhetor: his words would not represent him as he is, but as he will be and should be.⁵³ Both sides exchanged speeches and treatises, always in expectation of friendly or critical comments from the correspondent. And despite his reputation, Procopius sometimes seemed to be relieved when he

received a positive assessment and was likewise afraid of a harsh evaluation by his counterpart. He is always willing to acknowledge the abilities of fellow rhetors.⁵⁴

An essential part of Procopius' self-perception as a rhetor was his civic pride and the strong bonds that connected him with his hometown of Gaza. The motivations by which he was driven are obvious: to live as an integrated part of the civic community was an essential component of classical self-definition, to which Procopius subscribed. Seen from the perspective of a multicentred polis world a career at the emperor's court was not an aim to aspire to by any means. In Procopius' mind it was rather Gaza that was especially worthy of deep affection. He portrays his hometown as a prosperous citizens' community and a town where classical culture still has its place among his fellow citizens: retaining the opportunity to be recognised and praised by his fellow citizens proved to be one of the most decisive reasons for Procopius to resist any offers to change his hometown for another one or to live in Constantinople.⁵⁵ To have intervened successfully in a diplomatic process where a Gazan embassy had delivered a petition to the imperial court, probably in connection with an application for tax relief, became a point of civic pride.⁵⁶ To sum up, the world of sophistic rhetoric seems for Procopius to be a comprehensive cosmos, encompassing specific values, cultural contents and a community of like-minded people, almost a world of cultural and personal self-sufficiency, where further needs and ambitions are not required. In this regard Procopius is comparable to other sophists, such as Aelius Aristides or Favorinus, who are eager to find their own identity, primarily through the expert opinion given by a circle of peers with identical values.⁵⁷ In contrast to them, however, the applause of the citizen community and his status as a 'public citizen' is for Procopius of much higher worth for his self-perception. As such Procopius represented the polycentric world of ancient urbanism, including local power opportunities and local influence. Does this mean that he rejected legal knowledge altogether?

The world of law as seen by Procopius

Considering his strict commitment as rhetor and sophist it is worth exploring how Procopius evaluates the world of law, its rules and representatives. In marked opposition to his clear-cut identity as rhetor and against the picture of ongoing mockeries and debates between him and his lawyer brothers, there are many hints in his correspondence of an overlap between Procopius' world of rhetoric and the world of laws. One reason for this is his far-reaching network of personal relationships.⁵⁸ Of course it encompassed not only rhetors

or an iatrosophist like Gessius but also several lawyers or former fellow students who had added legal studies to their rhetorical skills in order to qualify for a range of job opportunities.⁵⁹ Despite rare laments that the addressee had abandoned philosophy for law, Procopius carefully cultivated his relationships with many of these people, asking them about their current situation, congratulating them on further advancement in their careers and praising their virtues and achievements.⁶⁰ This lively exchange of communication and information gave the rhetor a certain share in, or at least a basic knowledge and understanding of, the world of laws.

And there is firm evidence that Procopius' considerable reputation as a truly public figure depended not only on the quality of his treatises and speeches or his abilities as a teacher but also on his competence as patron in legal struggles. Many of his letters are devoted to the request for legal support, not for Procopius himself but for the benefit of relatives, friends or fellow citizens.⁶¹ The legal matters treated in these letters cover the whole sphere of human life: inheritance disputes, property disputes between siblings, a case of kidnapping, calumnies, illegal treatment of a merchant by imperial bureaucrats and the case of a monk with an insolvent family estate who was endangered because the buyer was eager to exploit the monk's financial distress for his own benefit.⁶²

A century ago, in his study of the 'School of Gaza', Kilian Seitz ascribed a certain artificiality to the letters of Procopius and so raised doubts over whether Procopius was dealing with real cases or just inventing rhetorical problems and models as exercises for his students.⁶³ Other scholars have picked up his points.⁶⁴ Of course, Procopius' letters present several rhetorical *topoi*: for example when he evokes images of certain places or deploys classical rhetorical schemes.⁶⁵ However, there are good arguments for accepting authenticity in cases where he argues for help-seeking clients, not least because sophists quite often stood up for people seeking their help, and the special form of legal advice he provides can be explained by the special relationship Procopius had with imperial bureaucrats. That no person of public interest, such as Bishop Marcianus or his pupil Choricus, is to be found among his correspondents, and that the only addressee (except his brothers) who can be identified in independent sources is the iatrosophist Gessius,⁶⁶ is no argument against the authenticity of his engagement. In fact his letters show that the famous sophist had several friends, not only from the upper social layers, whom he was ready to support with his influence.

Those letters demonstrate that Procopius not only knew whom to consult on these problems but also applied appropriate language and

displayed a remarkable sensitivity concerning the matters at hand. To persuade his brother Zacharias to give his support, he described him as the hope of people in need, whose assistance had been tested and proven in several cases. He denounced the misuse of legal rules, which ought to be resolved through the intervention of the appropriate people, and praised the restoration of justice that could be attained.⁶⁷ In order to persuade his friend Castor to assist in a case of calumny he states that his client is in need of a just advocate who is powerful enough to shatter these allegations.⁶⁸ In another case he expresses his hope that his friend Diodorus will search through the legal archives immediately and will, after sharpening his language, shoot a stream of words against the criminals.⁶⁹ Occasionally Procopius himself betrays legal knowledge, such as when he explains the case of an insolvent estate: the problem of his client, the pious Timotheus, his father and his younger brothers was, according to his statement, not actually caused by the mortgage on the family's estate and the existence of several creditors but by the unfair behaviour of only one of them.⁷⁰ This scoundrel, so Procopius argued, was claiming the only remaining house as his property, although the value of the estate exceeded the debts by a considerable margin. Moreover, the absence of interested buyers increased his arrogance even more. Hence Procopius requested that the judge Diodorus intervene immediately by exerting his authority on the dishonest creditor.⁷¹ Either a buyer had to pay the adequate price, or Diodorus had to force the creditor to be content with his due. The man responsible for the troubles was simply in need of effective correction and appropriate constraint.

The strategies Procopius pursued in his letters to support his clients' concerns seem sophisticated and bear witness to his rhetorical abilities. In most cases, he applies a morally charged language, depicting in the darkest colours the urgent needs of his client and the injustice he is suffering, only to contrast to them the excellent reputation of the addressee as a 'pillar of justice', which makes the hope of relief realistic.⁷² Moreover, he bases his request on the reciprocity of benefits: whereas he, Procopius, supplies the words to indicate the pending problem, the addressee has the opportunity to find the solution and thereby attends to the restitution of justice, so that both of them will profit from their engagement.⁷³ In one case, where the function of his brother as governor is at stake, Procopius even goes so far as to indicate that a *curiosus*, actually subordinated to his brother, was guilty of breaking legal rules. Therefore his brother has to act, even if only to save his own reputation.⁷⁴ It becomes obvious that Procopius, in these cases, stages himself as a power broker who is willing to arbitrate between the local world of individual needs and the lofty world of imperial bureaucracy.⁷⁵

Most of the letters are not explicit about the details of the cases; some of them do not even give the name of the client, probably to protect the parties involved in case the letter did not reach its intended destination. On the other hand the letters convey a very colourful picture of the mechanisms of Late Roman law courts: a complicated system of legal rules; the dominant influence of the *potentes*, even in situations where it was not backed up by the rule of law; and abuses committed by imperial officials. They show that Procopius was by no means restricted to the pure academic world of *philosophia* but was in many ways connected to the world of law.⁷⁶

The apparent contradiction between these actions and the dispute with his brothers mentioned earlier and Procopius' argumentative reservations and attacks can be resolved by taking into account some of his own reflections. Procopius was absolutely proud and happy with his existence as rhetor and defended his claims whenever attacked, but he regarded the two worlds, rhetoric and law, as connected and complementary. Just as knowledge of legal rules is required to stand in front of the jury, success in the law courts is not possible without the appropriate language. Therefore he recommended to his brothers that they should cultivate their rhetorical abilities, and he praises former students for being able to combine their rhetorical and judicial knowledge.⁷⁷ A letter of recommendation is actually an attempt to place a grammarian of the Latin language at the office of imperial magistrates, using the argument that the magistrate in question will need the expert to refine the legal language in his decrees and judgements.⁷⁸ A comment by Paul Petit on Libanius' concept of *paideia* is certainly also valid for Procopius: 'La paideia est en effet poliade, civique et antipersonalliste: elle s'oppose tout naturellement à ces ferments de déracinement, d'étatisme et d'arrivisme individuel que sont au siècle de Libanius la sténographie, le latin et le droit'.⁷⁹ The letters of Procopius testify, however, that the two kinds of expertise depended on each other. At this point considerable differences emerge between, for example, Plato's fundamental refusal to accept sophistic rhetoric as a knowledge system and Procopius' more balanced attitude towards legal knowledge.

Legal and rhetorical knowledge in the world of Late Antiquity

Is Procopius in fact justified in claiming to be a negotiator between the world of law and the imperial bureaucracy, on one side, and the world of local conflicts, understood from the perspective of classical culture, on the other? Several doubts may be raised. After all, since the edict of Caracalla in AD 212, a growing part of the Roman population had access to Roman law and could use it to settle their conflicts.⁸⁰ The enormous importance of Roman law and legal

knowledge in running an even more centralised imperial bureaucracy in Late Roman times stands as a fact. Moreover, it has to be seen as a central part of the legitimacy of imperial authority. To act as the embodiment of law, as the champion of justice, is presented as a kernel of imperial legitimacy in a substantial number of legal preambles in the Theodosian and the Justinianic Codes, now further reinforced by Christian values. Emperor Theodosius even identified the importance of Roman law as being life's teacher (*magisterium vitae*).⁸¹

Procopius' ambitions relate rather to legal practice. Recently several studies have pointed to the gulf between the interests and practices that shaped the settling of disputes in the Late Roman Empire.⁸² This was not only the inevitable gap between law and real outcomes of legal proceedings, which was perceived at that time even more strongly because the law was now based on Christian values.⁸³ Nor was it only the issue of the steady influence of social prerogatives on the world of justice, very often leading to imbalances in the decisions reached.⁸⁴ In fact there existed, according to the particular local context, several traditions that shaped legal thinking and many ways to influence the final legal decision. Caroline Humfress has therefore argued for the value of the perspective of legal anthropology as a more appropriate way to analyse the manifold ways, and practices deployed, to solve legal cases in the Late Empire. Such an approach could take into consideration the perspective of individual actors, groups or communities and their respective 'horizons of the possible'.⁸⁵

Seen against this background, Procopius did in fact have opportunities to integrate his specific abilities and knowledge resources into this complex procedure of decision-making. The first opportunity arises from the still vital importance of rhetorical abilities for forensic argumentation. Formal juridical study was essential only for those advocates practising at the highest levels of the bureaucratic courts, and most advocates continued to be trained primarily in rhetoric, which did include some basic legal instruction.⁸⁶ In fact, there were many courtroom disputants in the later Empire who lacked any formal training at all, but for those who received it rhetorical education offered instruction in those practices and skills that would be required in the courtroom.⁸⁷ This is why several of Procopius' former students very successfully entered an imperial career. Likewise, the letters of their former master made clear some of his skill in successfully influencing forensic disputes. They testified to his hope, once expressed in a letter to the young rhetor Megethius, that the force of rhetoric could overwhelm even the culprit who had based his arrogant pretences on formal law: after being cracked by words,

beaten by the right arguments, all of the culprit's arrogance will collapse and justice will prevail.⁸⁸

Moreover, rhetoric played an important role even in legislative innovation in this period. The considerable legal activity of the early Byzantine period is not to be seen as pure juridification, that is, as an inherent development of law based on prior legal traditions, but as a multiplication of legal regulations on different matters. It was an attempt at all-embracing legislation under the primacy of politics, with very little participation on the part of the professional legal system. Since the emperors saw their legislation as an expression of their political role, as a form of establishing their authority, it did not matter if legal experts required, accepted or converted new norms.⁸⁹ What was necessary, rather, was a good justification grounded on established rhetorical or ethical values.

Attempts to reinforce the impact of imperial legislation by an elaborate preface and a tendency to a certain dramatic verbal exaggeration emerge quite clearly in imperial laws from Diocletian's reign onwards.⁹⁰ The responsive nature of imperial lawmaking, combined with the persuasive function of the epistolary form, permitted the emperors' lawmaking activity to facilitate two-way communications between subjects and emperor and to keep pace with social change. The presence of the imperial legal codifications shows the process of negotiation and legislation which drove legal change and both defined and limited the potential arbitrariness of autocratic rule. Most significantly, legal change was driven not only by emperors but also from below by the courts, judges, litigants and Christian religious reformers.⁹¹ It seems therefore to be no accident that the values and arguments in Procopius' letters skilfully touch on the communicational codes of imperial laws. They demonstrate a basic respect for social hierarchies, connected with the conviction that the protection of the weak and the securing of justice are the outstanding obligations of the imperial bureaucracy and its members.

Last but not least the relevance of Procopius within this process of influencing legal decision-making was also founded on social status. His immediate connection with the imperial council, through his brothers, was one of the most effective means to promote the requests of his clients, even if many of his interventions will probably not have been considered. His relationships with some local governors are a further contribution and show Procopius as a considerable local power broker, at the centre of a differentiated network. To assess the significance of his initiatives it has to be stressed that the advantage did not lie exclusively on the side of Procopius and his protégés. Being integrated into diverse informational channels and close to local problems of various kinds, Procopius was able to bridge the

informational gap between imperial capital and periphery and to act as an alternative channel. He was able, as he himself asserted, to report injustice that had befallen people but had not yet reached the notice of imperial bureaucrats. The existence of these alternative channels of information was essential, as the voluminous study by Christopher Kelly, in particular, has shown, to the functioning of late imperial bureaucracy, because it enabled the emperors to play one source of their legitimacy off against another, in order to stay more flexible in their handling of imperial authority.⁹² Against this background, Procopius' claim that his initiatives will create a mutual advantage for him, his protégés and the imperial bureaucracy, and that his specific rhetorical and cultural competences are essential for his activities, seems justified.

Even for the subsequent period both kinds of knowledge retained their specific scope, although the Byzantine Empire passed through deep transformations. In particular, the self-sustaining and self-servicing legal and administrative system, managed by lawyers, judges and functionaries, remained of considerable importance for the working system of Byzantium.⁹³ Justinian's *dictum* at the beginning of the *Institutes* – 'thus, in order to govern well, the emperor needed both weapons and law: the weapons for wartime, the law for peacetime'⁹⁴ – became a guideline for Byzantine emperors. At the same time, the multipolar world of local urban power that Procopius came from had vanished after heavy military blows, superseded by a growing Byzantine centralism.⁹⁵ These changes affected the educational system too. The complex system of larger and smaller schools that had existed in many towns of the Roman Empire almost completely collapsed, and even in Constantinople any attempts to establish larger educational facilities were based on private initiatives.⁹⁶

However, the values Procopius stood for and the classical culture he represented remained surprisingly influential even in the field of law.⁹⁷ This did not imply a legal justification of imperial rule. There was almost no such thing as a political philosophy in Byzantium.⁹⁸ But Gilbert Dagron rightly stated the difference between *ennomos arche* und *ennomos politeia*: even the Byzantine emperors who never legitimised their power according to constitutional law were dependent on promoting their claims to rulership, and the legal sphere proved to be very useful for this aim.⁹⁹ The *prooimia*, in particular, offer some considerations that grounded the planned laws in the philanthropic intentions of the emperor and the necessities of common welfare, sometimes grounded not only on commonplaces but also on broader ideas of classical philosophy. The symbolic message of these *prooimia* constituted an essential part of imperial legitimation.¹⁰⁰ A special reason for this implication was a legal tradition that took its

inheritance from Roman law as well as a biblical heritage that saw the emperor as a successor of Moses, being a 'lawgiver endowed with speech'.¹⁰¹ Therefore it is not surprising that both lawyers and rhetors, such as Michael Psellos, could have their share in the formation of Byzantine law.¹⁰² Moreover, at different stages, even the reception of Byzantine law was steeped in classical culture: during the middle Byzantine era, after a longer period of political crisis had reduced the level of legal expertise, legal experts sought to return the quality of law to its former heights. In order to clarify categories that had been forgotten in the meantime they produced *lexica* in the best philological manner of classical education.¹⁰³ This approach stands as a symbol of the high reputation that the classicism of past times held as an elite culture in Byzantium, be it as part of Byzantine literature or in the form of the conversational archaism that was cultivated at the court in Constantinople.¹⁰⁴ The basis for this pointed classicism was a consciously classical tradition of literature. It is therefore no accident that Procopius' letters have been transmitted in 30 manuscripts, an indication of the high reputation they enjoyed in Byzantine and Renaissance times as a precious testimony of ancient literature and the value system it embodied.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse the debate between the famous rhetor Procopius of Gaza and his two brothers, working as jurists at the emperor's *consistorium* at Constantinople, about whether rhetoric or law should have priority. How was this dispute settled? What significance did the two sides attribute to their respective kinds of knowledge, and what were their arguments? Did the specific politico-cultural climate of Gaza play any role within this debate? And can either rhetoric or law in Late Antique Rome be considered the dominant discipline?

The result of our analysis is that both sides used different value systems to legitimise their claim of precedence for rhetoric or law. Evidently, from the perspectives of their adherents each type of knowledge embodied different approaches, values and functions. Thus the jurists polemicised against the pretensions, the alleged cultural haughtiness and the clinging to tradition of the rhetors, whose abilities they deemed useless for solving real problems and therefore worthless. This was attended by an enormous pride on the part of imperial bureaucrats not only in belonging to the imperial court after having made a successful career but also in their claim to offer the only knowledge effective in addressing legal and administrative problems.

This position might seem to be confirmed by the fact that even

Procopius has to concede several times in his letters that the time for the Attic-style jury courts and the predominant importance of rhetoric is definitely over. However, the proud rhetor argues persuasively that the increasing importance of legal knowledge does not coincide with a complete fading of the significance of rhetorical knowledge. Procopius promotes rhetorical knowledge as an integral part of a civic culture that is bound to a long but not sterile classical tradition, a tradition that could be transformed and reinterpreted continually to meet current requirements. This kind of rhetoric is for Procopius an all-embracing world: a pool of normative values, a basis for relationships with like-minded people and a reason for the enthusiastic applause that he was given by the citizens of Gaza.

Certainly, some of his arguments relate to his role as a celebrated public rhetor; they would not have been viewed the same way by all residents of the Roman Empire, and they cannot be used to prove the general importance of rhetorical knowledge. But Procopius' activities as a local patron, always ready to use his wide-ranging personal network to enable legal support for his clients, prove that his idea of classical culture was connected to civic engagement. This engagement was supported by the belief that it takes appropriate arguments, fed by classical values, to achieve justice against the world of imperial legislation. Procopius' letters, therefore, not only illustrate that the proud civic world of a prosperous city like Gaza provided a normative *cosmos* which could compete with the world of imperial Constantinople. They also support Caroline Humfress's call for a legal-anthropology approach because they reveal the ongoing significance of classical values as a source of legal practice in Late Antiquity.

Notes

- 1 Lib. Or. 31.2, 28; 62.21; 18.289; 48.22, 25, 28–30; 49.27–49.29; Liebeschuetz (1972, 242–246) and Petit (1955, 363–367).
- 2 Cribiore (2007, 83–110).
- 3 Cf. Humfress (2015, 140–155) and Harries (1999, 107). Penella (2009, 8) points to rhetorical exercises on judicial themes as part of the standard programme for students of rhetoric in Late Antiquity.
- 4 Kuhn (1970), Foucault (1966), Merton (1973) and Vogel (2004).
- 5 Asper (2016) has argued for a special role for mathematics as a leading form of knowledge in Greek history that has left its specific traits of formal logic in philosophy and other sciences; cf. Wallace-Hadrill (2008), Habinek and Schiesaro (1997) and König and Whitmarsh (2007).
- 6 Cf. Cameron (1991) and Humfress (2007, 14).
- 7 Harries (2012, 805).
- 8 Cf. Crook (1995, 191–196).
- 9 For Procopius' biography we have mainly the evidence given by his pupil Choricius. He was born around AD 465 in Gaza and died there in 528, a highly respected member of Gazan society. He never took part in theological debates,

- but he produced an enormous variety of scholarly pieces, comprising commentaries on biblical scriptures as well as rhetorical treatises and letters; cf. Amato (2010a). For the wide cultural horizon of Procopius see now the masterly book of Champion (2014, 105–135).
- 10 Zacarias 1, Martindale, PLRE II, 1193–1194; on his brothers Zacharias and Philippus cf. Proc. Gaz. Ep. 6, 18, 38, 45, 154. Cf. Ciccolella (2010b, 439, 443, n. 16, 39).
 - 11 For a very informative overview of the style and content of his letters see Ciccolella (2010a, 120–150).
 - 12 Ep. 18 to Zacharias. Ciccolella (2010a, 123).
 - 13 Ibid. Cf. also Ep. 38, 46, 138 to Zacharias as well. See, for example, Procopius' remarks about the dawn of spring, with roses and swallows, Adonis and Aphrodite as typical topics of his eloquence that he supposes to be especially ridiculous for his brother.
 - 14 Especially, Ep. 18 to Zacharias.
 - 15 Cf. Ep. 101 to Zacharias, where Procopius promises to 'laconise' his rhetorical style to meet the expectations of Zacharias.
 - 16 Cf. the laws of Diocletian and Valentinian I prohibiting astrology. CTh 9.18.2 (294), 9.16.8 (373); Fögen (1994, 58–59).
 - 17 Fögen (1994, 53–61).
 - 18 Ep. 7, 18, 37, 46, all of them either to Zacharias or to Zacharias and Philippus.
 - 19 Ep. 6, 39, 40, 45, all of them to Zacharias.
 - 20 Ep. 34, 47, 58, 62, 76, 100, 123. For Procopius' cultural horizons cf. also Ciccolella (2010a, 137).
 - 21 Ep. 38 to Zacharias.
 - 22 Ep. 44 to Zacharias.
 - 23 Ep. 44.
 - 24 Ciccolella (2010a, 124–125).
 - 25 Cf. the very illuminating study by Nesselrath (2006, 179–192).
 - 26 Ep. 101 to Zacharias: τοιαῦτα δύναται ῥήτωρ ἀγαθός, πρὸς πάθος ἔλκων οἶον καὶ βούλεται.
 - 27 Borg (2004, 157–178).
 - 28 Ep. 71 to Stephanus; presumably he is the same Stephanus as the Stephanus Grammaticus to whom Ep. 13 is addressed: Ciccolella (2010b, 467, n. 342).
 - 29 Ep. 37 to Zacharias and Philippus: πλὴν ὅτι μοι διπλασίαν ἐνεποίει τὴν ἡδονὴν τὸ κοινῇ προσερεῖν ὑμᾶς, ὥσπερ τοῖς εἰς Δέλφους ἀφικομένοις, ἐπειδὴν ὕμνον εἰπόντες Ἀπόλλωνά τε σχοῖεν τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ Ἄρτεμις ἅμα μέρος ἦν τῆς ὠδῆς.
 - 30 Ibid.
 - 31 Ibid.: ἀλλὰ γὰρ παύσομαι, μὴ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἄγαν ἐμφαίνειν ἐθέλων σοφιστῆς οὕτω που τάχα δόξω τοῖς γράμμασιν, καὶ γελῶντες ἀλλήλοις τοῦτο δὴ τὸ σὺνηθες ἡμῖν ἐπισκώψητε.
 - 32 Matino (2005, 15).
 - 33 So correctly Ciccolella (2010a, 128) and Kennedy (1983, 172). See especially his Ep. 159 to Bishop Elias, with Ciccolella (2006, 80–95). A very valuable hint is given by ter Haar Romeny (2007, 177, 189), who points to the fact that different schools of exegesis, even Jewish sources, are treated equally by Procopius and that doctrinal issues played no role. Moreover, all his comparisons refer to a distant, mythological or legendary past, or at least a Hellenic one. His pupil Choricus describes him as a sophist throughout his life who was also a Christian and a scholar; Choric. Or. 8.16, 21–22.

- 34 Cf. now Auwers (2004, 763–776) and Amato (2010b, 56–69).
- 35 *Ep.* 29 to Diodorus (a friend who had probably moved to Caesarea; see Ciccolella 2010b, 452, n. 133); 69 to Palladius (according to Martindale, PLRE II, 822, Palladius 16, he was the *consularis* of Palaestina Prima; cf. Ciccolella 2010b, 448, n. 84); 125 to Gessius (a medical expert from Alexandria; see Ciccolella 2010b, 449, n. 94; PLRE II, 511, Gessius 3); 159 to Bishop Elias (it remains unclear where Elias' episcopal seat was; Ciccolella 2010b, 453, n. 150); 164 to Gessius.
- 36 *Ep.* 30, 69, 125, 164. Cf. Ciccolella (2010a, 138).
- 37 *Ep.* 125.
- 38 *Ep.* 38 to Zacharias.
- 39 *Ep.* 16 to the iatrosophist Gessius: Τὴν ὑμετέραν ἐπιστολὴν εἰς χεῖρας λαβὼν αὐτὰς ἔδοξα μόλις ἀπειληφέναι τὰς Μούσας, ἔνθους τε ἦν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς καὶ οὐκ εἶχον ὃ τι καὶ γένωμαι, ὥσπερ οἱ Δελφοὶ ἐπειδὴν ὡς ἐξ Ὑπερβορέων ἐλθόντος Ἀπόλλωνος τὸ πρὶν σιγῶντες πλήρεις ἐξαίφνης γένωνται τοῦ θεοῦ τοιοῦτος ἦν τις ἐγώ, πάντα θαυμάζων, τῶν ὀνομάτων τὴν ὥραν, τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλα τούτων ἁρμονίαν, τὸ διὰ πάντων κάλλος ἐπιφαινόμενον, καὶ τὸ δι' μέγιστον, τοὺς ὑμετέρους τρόπους, ἐξ ὧν ἡμῖν προήλθε τὰ γράμματα.
- 40 *Ep.* 38: ἀλλ' εἶθε μοι πάλιν ἦν βῆμα σεμνὸν καὶ δικαστῆς Ἀττικὸς καὶ σχῆμα λαμπρὸν Ἀθηνῶν, ὅτε ῥητορικὴ μὲν ἐπὶ σεμνῆς ἡκμάζεε τύχης ...
- 41 *Ep.* 91 to Hieronymus. Hieronymus was a sophist from Elusa, who had studied and taught in Alexandria and Hermopolis and afterwards returned to Elusa: Ciccolella (2010b, 439, n. 12).
- 42 *Ep.* 91.
- 43 *Ep.* 170 to Megethius. Ciccolella (2010a, 124–125). For the dispute between rhetor and sophist cf. Amato (2006, 271, 274–281).
- 44 *Ep.* 20 to two brothers from Egypt.
- 45 *Ep.* 92 to Orion, who had studied rhetoric with Procopius and law in Berytus and afterwards settled down at Constantinople. Cf. Ciccolella (2010b, 476, n. 446); PLRE II, 813, Orion 3.
- 46 *Ep.* 139 to Orion and 140 to Diodorus.
- 47 *Ep.* 2, 81, 86, 91, 124 to Hieronymus, 20 to two brothers from Egypt, 21 to Sosianus and 92 to Zacharias and Philippus.
- 48 *Ep.* 112 to the clergyman Nonnus, 115 to Philippus and 123 to Orion. For ascetic tendencies in Late Antiquity, cf. Brown (1988) and Elm (1994). Procopius' pupil Choricus paints a picture that represents his teacher as a man with strong ascetic habits, Choric. *Or.* 8. On *apatheia* as a means to moral improvement in the Stoic debate, cf. Krentz (2008, 122–135) and Rapp (2010, 9–16, especially 14).
- 49 *Ep.* 3 to Pythius (a man of letters; PLRE II, 931, Pythius; Ciccolella 2010b, 441, n. 25), 36 to Elias, 98 to Diodorus, 117 to Dorotheus (a scholar; cf. Ciccolella 2010b, 483, n. 456; Garzya and Loenertz 1963, XXIX), 121 to Nephalius (either a clergyman or an imperial official; cf. Ciccolella 2010b, 449, n. 91), 141 to Cyriacus, 147 to Musaeus (perhaps a poet; cf. Ciccolella 2010b, 494, n. 702) and 162 to Nilus (a former student of Procopius; Ciccolella 2010b, 499, n. 764).
- 50 *Ep.* 23 to Diodorus, 53 to Philippus and 45 to Zacharias and Philippus: τὸ δὲ κονισιότιον ὃ τι μὲν ἐστὶν ἀγνοῶ, – Ῥωμαϊκῷ γὰρ κόμπῳ προσβάλλει τὴν ἐμὴν ἀκοήν – δι' ὑμᾶς δὲ καὶ τοῦνομα φιλῶ, καὶ θεῖον ὄντως αὐτὸ βουλοίμην ὑπάρχειν, καὶ τιμῷ προσηγορίαν ἧς τὸ ἔργον ἠγνόησα. It is unclear whether Procopius is motivated by Epicurean influences, which mostly stressed the distance of the gods from earthly events and therefore conceded to their adherents the right to concentrate on themselves. Epicureanism lost its influence in Late Antique Platonism, but there was a reception of Epicurean ideas later among several Neoplatonic authors such as Damascius or Simplicius. Cf. O'Meara

- (1999, 83–91). Procopius could be motivated by Christian approaches that stress a distancing from tribunals and fora (cf. Tert. *De pallio*) or by philosophical considerations that advise one to weigh the form of political activities against one's own abilities, cf. Vogel (2013, 341–342) and O'Meara (2005, 91–100).
- 51 *Ep.* 80 to Hieronymus, 113 to Hieronymus and Theodorus, 114 to Hermeias (a magistrate; cf. PLRE II, 548, Hermeias 5; Ciccolella 2010b, 483, n. 545) and 134 to Stephanus (a high magistrate, perhaps the proconsul of Palaestina; Ciccolella 2010b, 490–491, n. 646).
- 52 For Gessius see Watts (2009, 113–134).
- 53 *Ep.* 33 to Dorotheus, a rhetor. Cf. Ciccolella (2010b, 456, n. 180).
- 54 *Ep.* 33 to Dorotheus, 87 to Agapetus, 117 to Dorotheus and 169 to Megethius and Procopius.
- 55 *Ep.* 76 to Zacharias and Philippus. For competing offers to Procopius see *Ep.* 80 to Phaedrus, 113 to Hieronymus and Theodorus, 114 to Hermeias and 134 to Stephanus. For the lively cultural profile of Late Antique Gaza as a prosperous city see Saliou (2005), Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2004) and Tiersch (2008).
- 56 *Ep.* 59 to Philippus.
- 57 Cf. Eshleman (2012, 67–90) on the polarity between expert and *idiotes* in the self-definition of members of the Second Sophistic.
- 58 Cf. Ciccolella (2010a, 134–142).
- 59 *Ep.* 19 to Epiphanius (a sophist and lawyer who led a pleasant life in Alexandria; see Ciccolella 2010b, 451, n. 119), 96 to Silanus, 97 to Macarius, 143 to Zacharias and Philippus, 144 to Orion; 153 to Zosimus and Macarius (two former students of Procopius who changed to the study of law; Ciccolella 2010b, 496, n. 725) and 161 to Evagrius (presumably also a former student of Procopius; PLRE II, 402–403, Evagrius; Ciccolella 2010b, 498–499, n. 759).
- 60 *Ep.* 39–41, 45, 59 and 84 to Zacharias and Philippus.
- 61 *Ep.* 6, 12, 25, 43, 44, 45, 59, 82, 83, 84, 136, 137 and 143 to Zacharias and Philippus. For types of patronage in Late Antiquity cf. Krause (1987) and Marcone (1998, 338–370).
- 62 *Ep.* 6 to Zacharias, 8 to Diodorus, 12 to Zacharias, 14 to Palladius, 31 to Diodorus, 35 to Hilarius, 49 to Ulpus (a lawyer and former fellow student of Procopius; PLRE II, 1182–1182, Ulpus; Ciccolella 2010, 462, n. 255), 50 to Sosianus, 72 to Diodorus, 73 to Castor, 109 to Silanus (a lawyer and former fellow student of Procopius; Ciccolella 2010, 463, n. 262), 111 to Diodorus, 118 to Diodorus, 137 to Zacharias and Philippus, 157 to Sosianus and 158 to Johannes (a lawyer in Caesarea; Ciccolella 2010b, 498, n. 747).
- 63 Seitz (1892, 11–18).
- 64 Ciccolella (2010a, 134–135).
- 65 For examples see Ciccolella (2010a, 136–137).
- 66 So correctly Ciccolella (2010a, 138) and Seitz (1892, 17).
- 67 *Ep.* 6 to Zacharias.
- 68 *Ep.* 73 to Castor: δέϊται δὲ γλώττης δικαίας καὶ λόγων εὐροίας σβέσαι δυναμένης συκοφαντίαν.
- 69 *Ep.* 72 to Diodorus.
- 70 *Ep.* 111 to Diodorus.
- 71 Unfortunately, nothing is known about this Diodorus.
- 72 *Ep.* 6 to Zacharias, 8 to Diodorus and 14 to Palladius.
- 73 *Ep.* 12 to Zacharias and 50 to Sosianus.
- 74 *Ep.* 12.
- 75 For this social role cf. now Nicols (2014), Krause (1987) and Meyer-Zwiffelhofer

(2002, 210–221).

- 76 The seeming discrepancy between academic retreat and patronage activity is in fact illusory because Procopius followed not only Christian examples (such as the monks Barsanuphius and John of Gaza) but also philosophical models. Cf. Schniewind (2005, 51–64) for the Plotinian sage.
- 77 Ep. 37, 38 and 44 all of them to Zacharias and Philippus; 64 to Sosianus; 96 and 97 to Macarius and Silanus; and 115 to Orion.
- 78 Ep. 13 to Alypius, Stephanus und Hierius (three grammarians who left Gaza for Antioch). Cf. Martindale PLRE II, 62, Alypius 6; 559, Hierius 8; 1029, Stephanus 8; Ciccolella (2010b, 447, n. 76).
- 79 Petit (1955, 347).
- 80 So correctly Humfress (2014, 89).
- 81 CTh 1.1.5, Uhalde (2012, 764–788) and Harries (2012, 789–814). On the aim of becoming the *magisterium vitae* as the declared goal of the Theodosian Code, cf. Harries (1999, 59–64).
- 82 Especially, Harries (1999, 172–190) and Humfress (2014, 92–99).
- 83 On this gap between justice and law, cf. Boeth. *Consol. phil.* 4. For this new Christian representation of justice in pictures and texts, cf. Cameron (1991), Ch. 6 and Uhalde (2012, 769).
- 84 Cf. on the discrepancy between the imperial promise of justice and equality, on the one hand, and the judicial privileges of the social elite, on the other hand: Garnsey (1970) and Uhalde (2012, 768).
- 85 Humfress (2014, 99–102; the quote at 102).
- 86 Humfress (2007, 14).
- 87 Humfress (2007, 14) and Harries (1999, 107). Several illuminating examples of the interplay between law and rhetoric are given in Amato, Citti and Huelsenbeck (2015).
- 88 Ep. 170 to Megethius.
- 89 Fögen (1987, 70).
- 90 Harries (1999, 58). A very detailed discussion of Constantine's legislation is Dillon (2012, 90–118).
- 91 Harries (2012, 807).
- 92 The remark by Kelly (2004, 191) puts the point well:

The art of successful rule was, in part, the art of incomplete and uncertain delegation. The exercise of imperial power sometimes entailed the ability to destroy established patterns or to prevent their formation, to create chaos, and to confound expectation. Intermittent terror and instability allowed emperors both to manage and to undermine their administration. It added force to their insistent claim that the continued importance of officialdom in the government of empire was dependent upon them personally and upon the vicissitudes of imperial will.

- 93 So, Fögen (1987, 70).
- 94 *Constitutio Imperatoriam maiestatem, prooemium*; cf. on law in Byzantium Simon (1994, 1).
- 95 Cf. Ostrogorsky (1963, 303) and Schreiner (2011, 83).
- 96 Cf. Speck (1974, 90): 'Staatliche Bildungspolitik ... ist eine Chimäre moderner Forschung und nur dazu geeignet, das Bild der byzantinischen Gesellschaft zu verfälschen. Bildung ist in Byzanz Privatsache'. Since 650 higher education was more or less concentrated on Constantinople. There was no institutional

- continuity of any higher education because all schools were private foundations. Cf. for an overview Lemerle (1971, *passim*), Lemerle (1977), Beck (1966, 69–81) and Schlange-Schöningen (1995, 40–64).
- 97 Cf. Lemerle (1971, 106–107) on the Byzantine Renaissance from the ninth century AD onwards; a good example of the continuation of knowledge interests originating in classical antiquity is Photius. See his letter to Pope Nicholas, PG 102,593–617; Lemerle (1971, 197–198).
- 98 Cf. Beck (1981, 4).
- 99 Dagron (1994, 29–35).
- 100 Fundamental is Fögen (1987, 137–139).
- 101 The basis for this assumption is Philo Alex. *De vita Mosis* 1.162; for several legitimising examples from the preambles of the Ecloga, the Prochiron and the Novellae, cf. Dagron (1994, 35–43, especially 39) on the Novels of Leo VI:
- Lacking a Tribonian of his own, Leo VI indulges with evident pleasure in legal rhetoric. He takes the stance of an emperor who moralizes and philosophizes, who reflects and decides ... In fact, Leo hardly legislates at all: he speaks, convinced that the imperial function resides entirely in his activities of speech, whether it be preaching in a church or drawing up tactical rules. He is convinced that imperial speech carries in itself a reforming virtue.
- On judicial rhetoric see Pieler (1978).
- 102 Dennis (1994). Cf. on the importance of extra-legal factors such as mercy or personal relations as a legitimate source for the finding of justice, Kazhdan (1994, 216).
- 103 For the extended reception of Roman law in the *Basilika* of the ninth century and the problems connected with it, cf. Burgmann *et al.* (1990).
- 104 Recent research has shown that book culture was not restricted to Constantinople at all but could be found in local monasteries and beyond, cf. Holmes (2002, 17). For the classicising tendencies in Byzantine literature and court communication, cf. Horrocks (2010, 270).
- 105 Ciccolella (2010a, 120), Garzya and Loenertz (1963, V, IX–XIII) enumerate 31 manuscripts and Amato and Ciccolella (2010, 51).

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Tradition and habituation in rhetorical and monastic education at Gaza

Michael W. Champion

Introduction

The differences between late antique and modern education are legion. The former was almost entirely restricted to a very small number of elite men whose families or patrons could fund their studies. The ‘knowledge economy’ was unknown, with few jobs requiring more than low levels of literacy. For all the undoubted importance of education for a small section of society, the idea of establishing ‘learning cities’ for optimising sustainable development, physical and financial resources, human potential, social stability and personal fulfilment was foreign to late antiquity.¹ Yet one of the values of intellectual and cultural history is recovering strange traditions from lost worlds. In the following analysis of aspects of education in Gaza, I aim to put ancient and modern worlds into mutually illuminating dialogue, contributing to understanding significant aspects of Gazan education and raising potentially productive questions for the ‘learning city’ paradigm. The ‘learning city’ approach may provide a useful heuristic framework for evaluating aspects of the success of education in Gaza, while the Gazan experience may simultaneously help scholars identify, describe and justify principles essential for education which enhances human flourishing.

With these twin aims in mind, this chapter offers case studies of two different albeit overlapping educational cultures in sixth-century Gaza – the classical rhetorical ‘schools’ and the surrounding monasteries.² In the first case study, I briefly describe key features and social structures of Gazan ‘schools’ at levels above basic grammatical training, before arguing that a creative use and misuse of classical traditions was crucial for intellectual innovations and the process of forming students’ character through education. The case study points both to the centrality of informal networks and the role of tradition and local cultures in learning communities, while questioning models

that privilege conflict when characterising Christian-pagan relationships in Gaza. The second case study highlights education in a rather different mode – monastic education as habituating monks into humility. It contributes to recent scholarly debates about what made monastic education (*paideia*) at Gaza distinctive and again argues that tradition plays crucial roles in education conceptualised as the lifelong formation of character. By way of conclusion, I apply ‘learning cities’ theory to the case studies more directly. Identifying tradition and habituation as constitutive of education in Gaza provides support for the ‘learning cities’ framework’s emphasis on local cultural conditions and offers insights into the actual practice of lifelong learning. The Gazan examples also confirm the power of informal networks, public support and structures that encourage the common learning experiences of diverse social groups. While evaluation of the health of informal networks and supporting civic structures is possible, difficulties in evaluating incommensurable cultures are pressing given the centrality of habituation and tradition in models of learning as formation.

Gazan rhetorical schools: creative interactions of local traditions for character formation

Fifth- and sixth-century Gaza prospered, capitalising on its geographical position on the Mediterranean at the node of significant Roman roads. Trade (especially in wine and oil), ‘tourism’ (sometimes connected to education: for example in the rhetorical displays which featured alongside pantomimes in the *dies rosarum*, the festival of Aphrodite and Adonis), pilgrimage routes through Palestine to Jerusalem and students attracted to its classical and monastic education connected Gaza to other significant late antique cities.³ While our sources for education in Gaza are most numerous for the period bridging the reigns of Zeno (474–491) to Justinian (527–565), the fourth-century pagan sophist Libanius speaks of Gaza as a ‘workshop of rhetoric’ (*Or.* 55.34 Foerster and Richtsteig), pointing to a longer history of rhetorical education in the classical tradition and to the ways in which education, an ‘internationalised’ enterprise then as now, can bridge civic, ethnic and religious boundaries.⁴

In this regard, rhetorical teachers at Gaza signal their debts and intellectual connections to Alexandria (e.g. Aeneas *Ep.* 15 Positano; Procopius *Ep.* 48, 57, 96, 104, 119, 127 Garzya and Loenertz), where the city council (*boule*) supported chairs of rhetoric, philosophy, grammar and medicine, and built and maintained a large educational complex directly abutting the civic baths in the heart of the city.⁵ In Gaza, we lack evidence for whether or not the *boule* supported education, although sophists delivered public orations and embassies

on the city's behalf, and the rhetor Choricus (b. c. 490s) notes that the local bishop expressed an interest in the 'school' after the death of the Gazan intellectual Procopius (c. 475–538).⁶ Such factors suggest politico-ecclesial will to support education, if not the direct institutional links that have sometimes been claimed.⁷ Church interest in the schools did not preclude pagan members; the sixth-century pagan Neoplatonist Damascius (b. c. 480) speaks of an Antonius, perhaps a sophist or advocate, who made mid-fifth-century Gaza more pious than it had been (Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 186 Zintzen). Procopius' older contemporary, Aeneas of Gaza (d. 518), claims that his hometown has re-established the 'Academy and Lyceum', a reference to the famous Athenian schools of Plato and Aristotle, whose ideas are debated in Aeneas' philosophical dialogue the *Theophrastus*. Choricus compares Procopius to Classical Athenian statesmen, including Pericles, Demosthenes and Alcibiades, while connections between Procopius and late antique Athens are suggested by his philosophical writings opposing Proclus (412–485), a contemporary Athenian Neoplatonic philosopher.⁸ Caesarea was just as significant. It housed a large library which held works of classical philosophy, Hellenistic Judaism and patristics, and which probably supported the exegetical interests of Gazan teachers.⁹ Procopius rejected attempts to attract him to teach in Caesarea (Choricus, 8.14 Foerster and Richtsteig). These connections point to ways that education built and strengthened solidarities beyond civic boundaries.

For the elite, education formed a basis of enduring friendships and shared cultural assumptions across the empire. This is clear in letters from the period (and earlier), as writers seek to bridge the physical distance between them by calling on shared memories and classical discourses (e.g. Aeneas, *Ep.* 15 Positano).¹⁰ Letter writers often refer to classical mythology and canonical poets, recalling shared pleasures. Such narratives are used by Aeneas, for example, in letters of recommendation as something of a guarantee that the potential student or employee will be able to fit easily into his new social position as well as in business transactions, consolatory letters and even a letter about a new hydraulic device (e.g. *Ep.* 3, 5–9, 11, 13, 17–20, 25 Positano). This dynamic is also captured by another of Aeneas' letters, which prefaces an allusion to Plato's *Phaedrus*, a text which also plays a prominent role in Aeneas' *Theophrastus*, with a reference to the *Odyssey*, in an appeal to his friend Cassus to return to civic life:

When Laertes was an old man, he no longer wanted to be king, nor to govern men, but he wanted to be a gardener and care for trees. You seem to me to emulate this man, for otherwise you would not, having left the city and its inhabitants, and sitting around in the

open for such a long time, spend your time talking to plants. But it was unnecessary to have called to mind Laertes but rather Socrates and the Socratic teaching, in which he philosophised pleasingly and properly that places and plants do not tend to teach anything, but rather the men who are in the cities do. Obeying Socrates instead, and disregarding the fields where the farmers pluck the fruit which is barren of wisdom, be reminded of your familiar schools, in which it is possible to learn and teach a certain wisdom, and indeed the greatest thing: to please one's friends.¹¹

This letter demonstrates how shared enjoyment and knowledge of classical narratives helps to form and maintain enduring friendships and make sense of the lives of late antique students. The letter also captures neatly the Platonic intuition, explicitly espoused by Aeneas, that cities teach (*Phaedrus* 230d). In this view, cities are places where people from different backgrounds mingle, test out ideas and form friendships partly based on shared participation in a greater civic project in the Socratic sense of learning about and exercising the virtues. This is the sense in which 'people in the city' can teach Socrates: civic life is learning to get along with each other. It is, crucially, the thing Aeneas identifies as the most significant thing about the late antique schools, in his claim that the school's greatest wisdom is learning how to please one's friends. Aeneas' appeal to Cassus builds rhetorically on the traditional claim that the schools are valuable partly because they support social cohesion and prepare people for the political task of living together. The school, like the city itself, is education for life, while it also provided workers with skills required to support civic life in the imperial bureaucracy and church hierarchy.¹²

Aeneas begins his philosophical dialogue with another reference to the *Phaedrus*, this time to its opening lines ('where are you going and from where have you come?'), and the idyllic natural setting under a tree on the banks of a river (transposed by Aeneas from Plato's Ilissus in Attica to the Nile near Alexandria; *Phaedrus* 227a, 229a; *Theophrastus* 1.2, 2.5–2.6). In this comparison, the pagan character Theophrastus is aligned with *Phaedrus* while the Christian Euxitheus plays Socrates, placing an initial question mark over Theophrastus' arguments while also connecting Aeneas' dialogue to a well-established intellectual tradition. Christian teaching is set within the Platonic tradition to establish its credentials in an intellectual community that values its classical past. Over the course of the dialogue, the 'Socrates' character progressively educates his interlocutor in Christian truth claims – about the pre-existence and transmigration of soul and the creation and eternity of the world –

and the dialogue ends in prayer to the Christian God.¹³ Aeneas' intertextual use of Plato thus lays claim to the Platonic tradition in order to innovate. Wider cultural plots of Socrates as a Christlike teacher are in play and support the notion that the dialogue's Platonically shaped instruction is intended to strengthen the Christian allegiances of students in the late antique schools and move all students, such as the dialogue's pagan philosophical character Theophrastus, to Christian devotion.¹⁴ Strikingly, even this last move is shaped by the Platonic tradition, as the shared prayer of philosophically united friends at the end of Aeneas' *Theophrastus* is itself a direct imitation of the final scene of the *Phaedrus* (279c). The desired formation into a particular kind of late antique Christian culture is facilitated by the tradition of Platonic dialogue Aeneas alludes to throughout his treatise, as the rationality of Christian beliefs and practices are partly modelled on and justified by Platonic precursors.¹⁵

Aeneas' younger contemporary Zacharias (d. after 536) uses the *Phaedrus* in similar ways, while extending the reach of Christian truth claims.¹⁶ In his *Ammonius*, Socrates' original enraptured pleasure in the beauty of the natural environment (*Phaedrus* 230b–c) is transferred to a delighted description of a new church in the mouth of a student 'inclining towards paganism' (*Ammonius* pref. 2, 66–81). Here the pagan-leaning student who will be instructed in Christian truth over the course of the dialogue is identified with Socrates, signalling Zacharias' more direct attack on the Platonic tradition in comparison to Aeneas' earlier work, even as the tradition remains essential for his educational project. Beauty, as in the *Phaedrus*, is still intimately connected with philosophy, but paradigmatic beauty is now located within Christianity. Like Aeneas, Zacharias uses his dialogue to form the beliefs and behaviours of students in the schools, performing in the text a desired religious orientation.¹⁷ His choice of a student who is unsure of his religious affiliation as the principle interlocutor points to the implied audience of the dialogue as a whole, evidence for continued religious heterogeneity in the classrooms of late antiquity. Further, his continued use of a Platonic genre, and deployment of arguments found within the Platonic tradition for Christian purposes (albeit without the philosophical acumen found later, for example, in the Christian Neoplatonist John Philoponus in sixth-century Alexandria), is an example of the centrality of tradition in helping students connect with the material they are being taught and then motivating them to adopt character-forming beliefs through their learning.¹⁸

In sum, both Aeneas and Zacharias deploy intertextual allusions to the *Phaedrus* to encourage students who recognised and valued the

intellectual claims of the Platonic tradition and its associated cultural practices to enter into new cultural, intellectual and religious worlds. In aligning the Christian teacher with Socrates, Aeneas appropriates the cultural authority of a hero of classical philosophy for his project of forming Christian beliefs and practices in his students, while Zacharias goes one step further, suggesting that Christianity has things to teach even Socrates. Both writers, however, are thoroughly dependent on earlier rhetorical and philosophical traditions in constructing their dialogues. They have themselves become, through their own education, habituated to the narratives, practices and thought patterns of classical *paideia*, like those revealed in Aeneas' letter to Cassus, with its sometimes tacit, if always culturally authoritative arguments from Homer and Plato, and traditional claims about the relationship between cities, education and friendship. Their writings are evidence for the creative use and misuse of tradition in perpetuating a culture of classical *paideia* in a Christian world.

Lifelong learning in the monasteries at Gaza: formation in humility

In moving from the classical classrooms to the Gazan monasteries, we are not entering a completely separate tradition. In the sixth-century letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, we see that the monasteries which were dotted around the city of Gaza interacted with townsfolk, and the desert was imagined in monastic literature as a 'city' from at least the *Life of Antony*.¹⁹ We hear from Zacharias that Aeneas of Gaza consulted a local monk, Abba Isaiah, on how to interpret Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus (*Vita Isaiah* p. 8, CSCO Scr. Syr. Ser. 3, t. 25, Brooks), and we know of contemporary monks trained in classical rhetoric.²⁰

One of them, the sixth-century monk Dorotheus of Gaza, remembers being completely absorbed in his studies (*Instructions* 10.105).²¹ He forgot eating, drinking, sleeping and the company of friends. He 'took no notice of, or pleasure in, anything except what [he] was reading' (10.105.23–10.105.24). This rhetorical education (and perhaps later medical studies)²² prepared him for monastic training:

When, therefore, I came into the monastery, I kept saying to myself: 'If in the case of outside speech there is such great desire and heat from devoting oneself to something in one's reading and coming into a habit of it, how much more in the case of virtue?'²³

Dorotheus elsewhere similarly describes his rhetorical education as 'foreign learning' (τὴν ἔξω παιδείαν; 10.105.1). Such descriptions pit monastic and classical education against each other. Dorotheus plays

up this competition when he recounts his victory over a local sophist who was questioning the logical cogency of Abba Zosimus' teachings on humility (2.36–2.37). But we should not overplay the differences Dorotheus constructs between classical and monastic education. The debate between the sophist, Dorotheus and Zosimus also reveals a world where such creative social and intellectual exchanges were culturally unremarkable.

Ultimately, Dorotheus believes that school and monastery can be compared because both aim to form character habits through the passionate exercise of particular capabilities, as passionate effort (ἐγένετο τοιοῦτος πόθος) brings about habitual actions (γενέσθαι ἐν ἔξει αὐτῇς). In this view, education in both is a process of habituation (ἔξις), a concept which is central for Dorotheus. He argues repeatedly that bodily actions affect the soul, habituating it to virtue or vice, suggesting that such habituation even shapes the soul after death (see also 12.129):

The virtue and vice practised continuously creates a particular habit (ἔξις) in the soul, and henceforth this habit (ἔξις) either punishes it or gives it rest.²⁴

For Dorotheus, 'whenever we do virtuous things, we come into the habit (ἔξις) of virtue'.²⁵ In an argument that stands in the Christian tradition of treating Stoic pre-passions as potential temptations, Dorotheus argues that everyone is naturally subject to instinctive urges and that the only danger is forming a habit (ἔξις) of acting in accordance with such urges (e.g. 11.113, 120–123).²⁶ Such habituation, for Dorotheus, is bodily and mental, involving physical labour (e.g. 12.130), rational cognition and the exercise of desiring capacities and the will. It requires time – a life-time – and the engagement of the learners at every level of their being. While time is essential for habit formation (hence the elevation of the virtue of patience and reconfiguring classical accounts of courage as endurance in monastic writings), Dorotheus notes that those who have practised virtue throughout their lives are not free from the danger of falling into sin – even a famous holy man fears sinning on his deathbed (2.37).

Scholarship on Gazan monasticism has yet to reach a consensus about the characteristic content of Gazan monastic education (*paideia*).²⁷ In the case of Dorotheus, I suggest that a distinctive account of humility, based on a theological anthropology that unifies his thought, makes sense of the education he offers Palestinian monks.²⁸ For Dorotheus, humility is learned through practice, not reason (ἀπὸ πείρας, not λόγῳ; 2.35.21–2.35.22), conceptualising it as a form of habituation. An immediate problem therefore arises: in what

sense is it possible to learn humility? In the disputation with the local sophist over humility, Dorotheus argues that humility is learned tacitly, in the same way that doctors and sophists learn their technical skills. Just as doctors and sophists acquire expertise which they cannot rationally specify through performing the characteristic activities of doctors and rhetors, so too monks tacitly learn humility. Dorotheus deploys key Aristotelian terms to make the argument that moral knowledge is a matter of experience, craft, activity and habit (ἐνεργεῖν, τέχνη, ἔξις) rather than theoretical knowledge (οἶδα and λόγος; cf. *EN* 1095a3, b5). In this frame, humility can be learned practically if not theoretically. This argument is designed to convince members of the classical schools that humility is the characteristic activity of monastic education and that it is education in the same sense that doctors and sophists are educated.

Dorotheus develops this claim about humility as practical knowledge in various ways. He likens the cultivation of the virtues to the building of a house (14.149–14.152). Humility provides both the mortar and the crowning glory of the house of the virtues: ‘just as each virtue needs to be accompanied by humility...so also humility is the perfection of each virtue and also the saints, progressing by it, come into humility’ (14.151.42–14.151.47).²⁹ Humility is the means and the end of the ascetic life. He argues that all virtues must be performed ‘with knowledge’ in order to be good (14.152.19–153.36). Dorotheus thinks that good actions are performed humbly because he understands humility as an inward disposition resulting from proper understanding of one’s true status as a fallen creature. Such a theological anthropology provides the argument that makes sense of the image of the house of the virtues. Dorotheus tells a story of the divine plan of salvation from creation to redemption, most prominently in the first *Instruction*, although the main themes recur repeatedly. They result in a classical theological anthropology where humans are naturally good, continually sinful and able to do good only by the gift of God.

Within this theological anthropology, humility is Christlike, uniting the believer close to God (1.11.2; 11.123.24–11.123.30; 2.33–2.34) and divine humility in particular (1.7.19–1.7.20). True humility requires knowledge and intelligence. It has the distinctive affective qualities of pity, mercy, compunction and sympathy. These characteristic affective qualities again make humility a divine virtue. Mercy (οἰκτίρμων) is the defining mark of God, Dorotheus claims, in a move echoing Gregory of Nyssa’s claim that forgiving sins is the ‘particular and exceptional characteristic of God’.³⁰ For Dorotheus, mercy ‘is the virtue that most properly imitates God; it characterizes him’ (Ἰδικῶς γὰρ ἡ ἀρετὴ αὕτη μιμεῖται Θεόν· χαρακτηρίζει αὐτόν;

14.156.11–14.156.12). Monks imitate God's merciful saving actions by taking on the sins of others and enduring sin and temptation courageously and patiently. 'It is impossible to obtain mercy except by humility' (ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν ἄλλως ἐλεηθῆναι, εἰ μὴ διὰ τοῦ ἐναντίου, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἡ ταπεινοφροσύνη; 1.7.23–1.7.25). As a 'divine work', humility involves continual prayer and dependence on God for everything (2.37.15–2.37.20). It includes self-examination and a continual denial of one's will, since the monk knows himself to be a fallen creature, and leads to joy, glory, tranquillity and thanksgiving (10.111; 11.117) since in the exercise of humility the monk experiences the glory of divine grace.

Humility, for Dorotheus, as for Benedict in the West (*Rule of Benedict*, [Chapter 7](#)),³¹ is partly achieved through bodily acts of submission, abasement (restraining speech, lowering one's eyes, penitent weeping, prostrating oneself before other monks) and physical labour. In responding to his teacher John's concern about whether work is needed for salvation or whether an internal disposition of humility is sufficient (recorded in two of John's letters, *Ep.* 277–278 Regnault), Dorotheus answers that humility places the humble in the ranks of those who have laboured long: toil and labour are sometimes impossible for the weak, but humility, since it is a characteristic of all humans, whatever their physical strength, is open to all (2.28.13–2.28.14). But Dorotheus sees a deeper problem: he views the question of how bodily labours may produce humility as a subset of the more general question about whether and how corporeal actions can have an effect on the soul, returning us again to questions of habituation.

Given his medical training, possibly in Alexandria, before he entered the monastery at Thawatha and took charge of its infirmary, medical debates about how 'psychological capacities follow the blends in the body' (Galen *Quod animi mores* 32.1–32.13, *scripta minora* 2) may help to provide an explanatory context. Galen had argued that the mortal part of the soul is 'the blend of the body' (*Quod animi mores* 44.6–44.8) and had drawn on Plato to argue that bodily practices, including the consumption of food and wine but also the exercises of gymnastics, music, geometry and arithmetic, may produce psychic virtues or vices (*Quod animi mores* 71.11–73.20; cf. *Timaeus* 87B). In this spirit, Dorotheus argues that the soul is affected sympathetically by the body and is disposed in accordance with it, using two terms also used as synonyms in medical literature (συμπάσχει καὶ συνδιατίθεται), to make plausible the claim that bodily labour can lead to the psychic disposition of humility (2.39.10; cf. Diocl. Fr. 38, Sor. 1.50, Gal. 15.88,793). Continuing the medical argument, Dorotheus claims that the soul is variously sympathetically affected by

the body, so that psychic dispositions change depending on whether one is healthy or sick, hungry or well fed and so on (2.38–2.39).³² In this case we have an instance where a monastic problem about how to relate labour and humility has resonated for Dorotheus with different but illuminating problems within medicine, pointing again to mutual interactions between different educational systems.

Scholars have noted how Christian *paideia* ‘ultimately presented a well-rounded culture of social ties, ideas, and participatory rituals’.³³ Dorotheus’ multifaceted account of humility constitutes *paideia* in this sense. It instils social order and creates community in the monasteries by encouraging members to submit to each other, share each other’s burdens and uphold each other in faith. It encourages the virtues that lead to tranquil and productive communal life while rejecting the vices most likely to create tension within the community. It sits within, and helps make coherent, a range of ideas about salvation and the humble, merciful nature of God and human anthropology and psychology, including the definition and place of the virtues and passions. This theological anthropology is performed in rituals and practices of humility, including continual prayer, confession, repentance and the wider sacramental life of the monastery, and it encourages characteristic affective states and expressions which help build up the community, such as weeping in grief for sins; bowing and prostration; acting with pity, sympathy and mercy; and rejoicing in divine grace.

Returning to learning cities, we note the way complex educational systems and traditions can cross-fertilise each other (with influence from classical rhetoric, philosophy and medicine). The local predominates, even as wider influences beyond civic borders, are crucial, as we see in Dorotheus’ inspiration from his teachers, local Palestinian traditions and Egyptian monasticism. Dorotheus grapples with problems generated within this monastic setting and beyond in discourses more explicitly inflected by the classical past, pointing again to the fundamental role of tradition in education. His account of humility draws together a vast range of virtues, practices and concepts in a theological anthropology which is dependent on a largely traditional account of the divine plan of salvation. Finally, this account of education in humility is based on a view of education as the formation of the whole person in an extended, lifelong programme.

Conclusion: education at Gaza and the ‘learning city’ approach

The learning cities approach has identified several essential ‘pillars’.³⁴ They include secure governance; broad-based civic engagement and participation, and adequate resourcing; support for education at

different levels of society, from families, informal social groups, workplaces and educational institutions (kindergartens, schools, universities, libraries, community centres); and a political and social will to support and encourage quality, lifelong education.³⁵ The learning cities approach claims that this results in (and is supported by) sustainability, economic and cultural diversity, increased social cohesion and the development of the capabilities of individual citizens.³⁶ A learning city requires rich formal and informal networks to provide widespread opportunities for learning and supports individual citizens to build relationships across the local cultures that can otherwise divide communities and lead to social fragmentation. Hence learning cities aim (and are partly advocated for) to create a desired 'solidarity freely entered into' that maximises social cohesion.³⁷

The learning cities framework thus maps closely to approaches to social and development policy based on a capabilities framework,³⁸ because it aligns the goal of learning to individual and communal flourishing and assumes that particular civic structures are necessary (and that some are better than others) for citizens to exercise freedoms that enable individuals and societies to prosper best.³⁹ In emphasising the importance of the local, the approach is sensitive to cultural complexity and diversity.⁴⁰ But since some local situations will be better than others in establishing the structures required for effective learning cities, the framework requires some broader anthropological, ethical and metaphysical claims (often implicitly unquestioned in the literature) to justify advocating for particular sorts of local arrangements. Historical case studies can be useful in this area because they may unmask claims to power in unstated assumptions about the genealogy of learning cities and because they can point to the strengths and weaknesses of actual attempts to draw on established traditions to place learning at the heart of civic life.

This chapter has focussed on the latter potential benefit of historical case studies, but the Gazan case studies can also illumine the former. Influential exponents of learning cities have located the origin of the concept in ancient Greece.⁴¹ This chapter began with Aeneas' use of Plato in late antiquity to construct a discursive space for Christian claims in Gazan elite education. The complexities of Aeneas' engagement with the classical tradition, which saw him drawing on Platonism while simultaneously marginalising it to engage and form students in Christian ways of life, justly make us wary of attempts to colonise the ancient world for learning cities. Given literacy levels in antiquity, especially beyond the most basic level of grammatical education which could facilitate business transactions and interpersonal communication, the public for which institutions such as

the library of Alexandria, the Serapeum or the Caesareum were allegedly accessible was strictly limited. Nor was Plato's idea of active citizenship, with the city as the *telos* of learning, a pathway to individual fulfilment, at least, not for the many.⁴² This situation was mirrored in Gaza, where advanced educational resources were not widely available (despite monastic libraries creating a larger, if still limited, audience), and the benefits associated with education for personal fulfilment were not broadly distributed (and were often available, if at all, when the learner's personal identity was conformed to the demands of civic bureaucracies or monastic discipline). One wonders, then, whether the classical examples are being used more for the construction and maintenance of a particular view of European identity, rather than for anything germane to the concept of learning cities. We may also wonder whether tying education and individual fulfilment to civic goods may play down ways in which goals of education may clash with civic power structures or limit individual expression.

Yet given the demonstrated potential of the learning city model, by way of conclusion, we may briefly measure education in Gaza against the 'learning city' pillars, while maintaining that aspects of the Gazan experience can illumine learning city theory. We saw that we know very little about the mechanics of the finances of education in Gaza; yet it is safe to say that private student income (as in the larger, publicly supported centres) probably accounted for the majority of funding, pointing to the need for informal supports from families and patrons for education to prosper. Nevertheless, the long-term success of education in Gaza from the fourth to the sixth centuries is evidence for institutional stability, perhaps suggesting that some public funding was available alongside these informal supports and that education was not merely made possible by the fame of charismatic teachers, as important as that may have been in what was largely a set of informal, loosely bound groups. We saw evidence for connections to the governing bodies (civic and ecclesiastical) in Gaza in the fifth and sixth centuries, suggesting that education was supported by broader governance structures, albeit through individual and informal connections, and thus benefited from the political will of local authorities. At the macro level, then, education in Gaza did not enjoy large-scale planned resourcing by the polis and church, but more informal networks of influence were powerful, which may provide hope in modern situations where formal social structures require strengthening.

At the micro level, we have seen cultural and religious diversity in the rhetorical schools, with students travelling vast distances for education and subscribing to differing religious belief systems. Yet

education was not widely available beyond very limited cultural groups, restricting education to small sections of society. Workplace supports clearly included the demand within the imperial bureaucracy, monasteries and church hierarchy for literate workers. These areas of the late antique economy supported education in cities across the empire. But what is perhaps instructive here is the small range of cities for which we have evidence of thriving educational establishments. Gaza ranks well below Constantinople, Alexandria, Athens, Berytus, Aphrodisias and Antioch. Caesarea was also more highly esteemed (e.g. Dorotheus, *Instruction* 2.34); Jerusalem and its surrounds offered prestigious monastic education. These centres seem to have been sufficient to provide most of the literate workers needed by elite society: one thing that the learning city framework foregrounds, if we needed it to, is the very limited dispersal of higher education in late antiquity, where one should always ‘think small’.⁴³ So too, informal processes and structures, such as word of mouth reputation-building, and letters of recommendation from patron to teacher or teacher to potential employer, seem to have provided the markers of quality for late antique education in Gaza.

The benefits of learning cities, in forming solidarities among different social classes and religious groups, are largely lost when education is delivered on such a small scale. Of course, education did build connections between people from different cultural and religious backgrounds: witness, for example, the friendship between the Christian Aeneas and the pagan iatrosophist Gessius (*Ep.* 19–20).⁴⁴ Yet such relationships, distributed informally between a small number of the educated elite, could not lead to the sustainable development outcomes or the fostering of economic and cultural diversity desired by the learning city framework. Gaza was no learning city, but what learning went on in Gaza points to ways in which education can lead to positive social outcomes if widely supported through well-developed civic structures and informal networks.

One area in which education in Gaza may illumine modern discussions is the question of ‘lifelong’ learning. Within the theological anthropology taught by Dorotheus of Gaza, monastic education can be viewed as lifelong training in acting humbly through physical labour, prayer, meditation on biblical texts and the sayings of the desert fathers, self-abasement, cutting off the will, compunction and repentance. What these practices have in common is the belief that habituation is a central aspect of human development, and an acknowledgement that such habituation is a somatic, cognitive, aesthetic, moral and emotional process which engages every facet of the learner’s life, and is achieved in the context of a particular set of communal traditions, conventions, practices and beliefs. The case

study of monastic education in humility I have charted may, therefore, be viewed as a particular grounding, enrichment and elaboration of the four aspects of learning identified by Delors *et al.*: ‘Knowing’, ‘Doing’, ‘Living together’ and ‘Being’.⁴⁵ Something like habituation, at Gaza, performed in Christian-Aristotelian guise, seems to be required of the concept of lifelong, whole-person learning. This approach captures the centrality of formation within traditions over extended periods of time, something that was crucial for the educational project also represented by the dialogues of Aeneas and Zacharias. It thus foregrounds the importance of culture, practice and intellectual commitments and beliefs for education. This is perhaps one further reason to be attracted to international development schemes and public policy programmes which are grounded in capabilities approaches since they are explicitly concerned with practice and communally understood and elaborated accounts of human flourishing. Of course, individuals and communities can become habituated to evil, unpleasant or just rather trivial things; traditions can enliven and strangle. A remaining challenge, which Gaza did not rise to meet and it remains to be seen whether ‘learning cities’ can overcome, is opening space for the evaluation of the goodness and potential creativity, or conversely the vicious foreclosing of human potential, of being habituated into a particular tradition or kind of ‘learning city’.

Notes

- 1 For the concept of a modern ‘learning city’, see www.uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/key-features-learning-cities (accessed 9 May 2017), Jordan, Longworth and Osborne (2014), Preisinger-Kleine (2013), Osborne, Kearns and Yang (2013) and Longworth and Osborne (2010).
- 2 Zacharias’ *Life of Severus* (Brooks) records religious conflict in the schools. For Gazan education, see Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006), Downey (1958), Seitz (1892), Wacht (1969) and Champion (2014). For ‘schools’, we should understand something like Wilson’s concept of ‘circle’ (Wilson 1983, 30–31). See Vössing (2007, 165).
- 3 Champion (2014, Chapter 2); on the economy and material culture of Gaza, see Saliou (2005). See also Glucker (1987). Choricus notes that travellers came to Gaza to hear rhetorical displays, partly attracted to Gaza’s balmy Mediterranean climate (Choricus, *Or.* 1.2.14 (= *Marc. I*; Foerster and Richtsteig); see also Choricus, *Or.* 2.2.5–2.2.6, 11–14 (= *Marc. II*; Foerster and Richtsteig). For an overview of Choricus on festivals, see Litsas (1982).
- 4 On student travel, see Watts (2004).
- 5 For the classrooms in Alexandria, see Derda, Markiewicz and Wipszycka (2007).
- 6 Public orations, for example: Procopius, *Panegyric to Anastasius*; church interest in schools: Choricus *Laud. Marc. I*, 8 (Foerster and Richtsteig). We know that education was publicly supported in places like Athens, Alexandria, Berytus and Constantinople. For a survey and sources for public funding for education, see Browning (2000, 857, 871–872).

- 7 See Penella (2009, 6); cf., for example, Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2004, 201).
- 8 See *Fun. Or. Proc.* (Or. 8), Sections 6, 10, 18, 49–50 (Foerster and Richtsteig); pp. 513, 514, 516–517, 525 in Corcella's translation. See also Corcella's discussion at pp. 509–510 in Amato (2010). On the authenticity of Procopius' philosophical writings, see Amato and Ventrella (2009). Procopius' *Commentary on Genesis* also displays knowledge of contemporary Neoplatonism.
- 9 For the library at Caesarea, see ter Haar Romeny (2007) and Runia (1996).
- 10 See Trapp (2003). This collection helpfully charts how classical education helped to shape social networks.
- 11 Λαέρτης ὁ γέρων οὐκέτ' ἤθελεν εἶναι βασιλεὺς οὐδ' ἀνθρώπων ἄρχειν, ἀλλὰ κηπουρός τε εἶναι καὶ τῶν δένδρων ἐπιμέλεσθαι [Od. XXIV]. σὺ δέ μοι δοκεῖς ἐξηλασκέναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον· οὐ γὰρ ἂν τὴν πόλιν καὶ τοὺς σαυτοῦ ἀπολιπὼν χρόνον οὕτω μακρὸν ἐν ἀγρῷ προσκαθήμενος τοῖς φυτοῖς διήγες λαλῶν; ἔδει δὲ οὐ τοῦ Λαέρτου μεμνησθαι ἀλλὰ Σωκράτους καὶ τῶν Σωκράτους δογμάτων, ἐν οἷς ἐκεῖνος χαριέντως καὶ σεμνῶς λέγων φιλοσοφεῖ ὅτι 'τὰ χωρία καὶ τὰ δένδρα οὐδὲν ἐθέλει διδάσκειν, οἱ δ' ἐν τῷ ἄστει ἀνθρωποὶ' [Phaedr., 230d]. τοῦτ' μάλλον πειθόμενος, μακρὸν τῶν ἀγρῶν ὑπεριδὼν, ἐν οἷς ἄπορον σοφίας < καρπὸν τοὺς γεωργοῦντας δρέπεσθαι> [compare Plato, Republic 457b: σοφίας δρέπων καρπὸν], ἀναμνήσθητι τῶν συνήθων ἐκείνων διατριβῶν, ἐν αἷς ἔνεστι σοφόν τι μαθεῖν καὶ διδάξαι καί, τὸ δὴ μέγιστον, εὐφραίνειν τοὺς φίλους (Aeneas, *Ep.* 2 Positano).
- 12 As Socrates would famously and fatefully discover, cities can turn against educators. Aeneas, in seeking to bolster support for classical education, does not attempt to advocate for education critical of the state. At times, his arguments tie education to a political *status quo* in a rather un-Socratic manner. For example, he argues that Christian monotheism supports the unique power of the single emperor, whereas pagan polytheism is linked to political mayhem (*Theophrastus* 37.25–38.1; see also Zacharias, *Ammonius* 316–324). It may be worth thinking, within the 'learning cities' framework, more explicitly about how claims that education prepares people for good citizenship can entrench political conservatism; a rich concept of such citizenship, which includes responsible, potentially radical dissent, is required.
- 13 For detailed analysis of these arguments, see Champion (2014, [Chapter 3](#)) and Sorabji (2012).
- 14 For Socrates as a Christlike teacher, see Trapp (2007).
- 15 Aeneas refers to several other Platonic dialogues over the course of the *Theophrastus*, alongside other philosophers in the Platonic tradition; many of these are identified by Gertz, Dillon and Russell (2012). His dialogue may have arguments of Hierocles of Alexandria, a fifth-century Neoplatonist, in mind: Hadot (1978, 20).
- 16 Zacharias became Bishop of Mitylene and spent most of his life outside Gaza. But his *Ammonius* is heavily influenced by Aeneas, and he refers to himself as 'Gazan' (*Life of Severus* 23.18–23.24.1 Brooks), so his works can illumine Gazan education.
- 17 On Christian dialogue in Late Antiquity, see Cameron (2014). Cameron briefly discusses Aeneas and Zacharias at 19, 24–25, 30. For a more negative appraisal of dialogue in the early Christian centuries, see Goldhill (2008).
- 18 For Zacharias' generating Christian problems, see Champion (2017b).
- 19 For 'the desert made a city', see *Life of Antony* 14. The image was also used in the title of an influential book on Palestinian (and Egyptian) monasticism: Chitty (1977). For the letters, see Regnault (1997–2002). For discussion, see Hevelone-Harper (2005).

- 20 See Watts (2006). P. Rousseau has commented on the self-characterisation of asceticism as a '*schola*, the world of the *paidagogos*' (Rousseau 1999, 59). Samuel Rubenson has greatly expanded our knowledge of classical learning in early monasticism. For an excellent survey, see Rubenson (2012).
- 21 See Regnault and de Préville (2001).
- 22 He ran the infirmary and brought medical books with him to the monastery.
- 23 Ὅτε οὖν ἦλθον εἰς τὸ μοναστήριον, ἔλεγον ἑμαυτῷ. Εἰ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἔξω λόγου ἐγένετο τοιοῦτος πόθος καὶ τοιαύτη θέρμη ἐκ τοῦ σχολάσαι τινὰ τῇ ἀναγνώσει καὶ γενέσθαι ἐν ἔξει αὐτῆς, πόσω μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς; (10.105.25–10.105.27).
- 24 ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ κακία ἐκ τοῦ συνεχῶς ἐνεργεῖσθαι ἔξιν τινὰ ἐμποιεῖ τῇ ψυχῇ, καὶ λοιπὸν αὐτὴ ἡ ἔξις ἢ κολάζει ἢ ἀναπαύει αὐτήν (11.122.13–11.122.15).
- 25 ὅσον ἐνεργοῦμεν τὰ καλὰ, ἐν ἔξει τῆς ἀρετῆς γινόμεθα (11.122.19).
- 26 On this move, see Sorabji (2000).
- 27 Attempts have been made by Hausherr (1937; excision of the will), Perrone (2004, 132, 148 and *passim*; *homopsychia* or 'being for the other'), Torrance (2013, 123–127; repentance) and Zecher (2015, 143–181; orientation towards death. Zecher's discussion also captures a wider range of phenomena, without placing orientation to death within the larger frame of the divine plan of salvation). Most recently, see the insightful analysis of Stenger (2017).
- 28 Given space constraints, I develop details of this argument elsewhere: see Champion (2017a). To connect to 'learning cities', I highlight how humility relates to communal traditions and lifelong habituation. Dorotheus' account of humility utilises earlier Gazan thought, itself informed by earlier Christian theology and Egyptian monasticism: see, for example, Isaiah of Scetis, *Asceticon* 2–3, 4, 9, 11; Zosimas, *Reflections* IV, VIII, XIVd; Barsanuphius and John, *Letters* 62, 70, 100, 231, 243, 277–278, 456, 462, 489–491, 550, 554–555.
- 29 ὥστερ ἐκάστη ἀρετὴ μετὰ ταπεινώσεως θέλει γίνεσθαι...οὕτως καὶ ἡ τελείωσις τῆς ἀρετῆς χρήζει τῆς ταπεινώσεως, ἥ καὶ ὅτι φυσικῶς προκόπτοντες οἱ ἅγιοι, εἰς ταπεινώσιν ἔρχονται.
- 30 Ἡ γὰρ τῶν ὀφλημάτων ἄφρασις ἰδιὸν ἐστὶ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐξαίρετον· εἴρηται γὰρ ὅτι, Οὐδεὶς δύναται ἀφιέναι ἀμαρτίας, εἰ μὴ μόνος ὁ θεός (*or. dom.* 5, 290.25–290.26).
- 31 See *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, edited and translated by Venarde (2011).
- 32 For this long-running debate, the details of which Dorotheus does not engage, see Sorabji (2006, 182–204).
- 33 Schwartz (2013, 146).
- 34 www.uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/key-features-learning-cities (accessed 9 May 2017).
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Delors *et al.* (1996, 49). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001095/109590eo.pdf> (accessed 9 May 2017).
- 38 Nussbaum (2011) and Sen (2001). For focus on gender issues and a review of different approaches, see Robeyns (2003).
- 39 Delors *et al.* (1996, 38).
- 40 Osborne, Kearns and Yang (2013, 410).
- 41 For example, Longworth and Osborne (2010, 368).
- 42 Cf. *ibid.*
- 43 Dillon (2005, 1).
- 44 For Gessius, see Watts (2009).

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Consensus versus diktat

Two models of cultural leadership in Gaza

Jan R. Stenger

Cultural discourse and leadership

Sixth-century Gaza has appealed for some time to classical and patristic scholars, and for obvious reasons. It grants us a fascinating glimpse into a vibrant and variegated urban community in late antiquity, which a massive body of still under-researched texts enables us to study.¹ What is more, the seeming permeability of cultural boundaries and the open-minded climate of Gaza, a far cry from rigid Christian orthodoxy, resonate with many of our modern concerns, as though the city were a showpiece of our Western tolerant mindset. This unique character seems to have sprung suddenly from the constant exchange between city and countryside, between laypeople and clerics, and between tradition and innovation in about 500 CE. In this light, Gaza figures as the intersection of cultural trajectories that contributed their assets to a healthy and successful community, just before the dawn of Islam.² Let us leave aside the question of whether this image is an all too telling projection of how we would like to see ourselves; even if we accept the established notion that there was a harmony between classical education and Christian faith, we cannot ignore the evidence that the terms and conditions of this symbiosis had to be constantly negotiated. Speeches delivered in public at Gaza by the rhetorician Choricius and missives by the monks John and Barsanuphius point to the existence of contentious and potentially divisive issues in the cultural discourse.³ Interestingly enough, at least some of the concerns and disagreements were related to the convoluted relationship between the secular and the sacred. This ongoing debate required ‘cultural leaders’, figures who managed to secure the standing necessary to put forward guidelines for the use of *paideia* and who would be willing to confront public controversy if necessary.

Given that the concept of cultural leadership has been established as a category of thought neither in classical studies nor in any discipline dealing with education, it is in order first to outline a working definition of the term in order to provide a theoretical framework for

the following discussion.⁴ For the purposes of this chapter, I suggest that a 'cultural leader' can be considered someone who, over a certain period of time, plays the role of an adviser for a group of people within a cultural context on questions relating to, among other things, education, academia, the arts and cultural values such as heritage and aesthetics. Whoever lays claim to cultural leadership believes that he or she is sufficiently competent to voice before an audience preferences and disinclinations about what people have achieved in the cultural sector and how they deal with cultural 'objects'; furthermore, that what he or she says on these matters can and should be adopted by others as a general guideline. The performance of such a public role encompasses a variety of verbal and non-verbal practices: published texts, speech acts, social interaction and the conspicuous display of behaviour combine to impose the leader's normative views upon the group members. That is to say, cultural leadership is a social function enacted through performances and modes of communication, both within a given community and towards those who do not belong to that group. What can be identified as leadership must, furthermore, be based on a set of skills and expertise that are not available to all members of the group but are valued by them as praiseworthy and essential. It is crucial that the resource 'leadership' is a relative notion, necessarily dependent on others; it has to be recognised by other people lest it cease to function. No man is an island, after all, and a leader by definition needs those who are willing to follow. Therefore, leadership is not a static quality or possession but has rather to be performed and displayed in interaction on every occasion when it operates. Finally, the extent to which cultural leadership can effectively be practised depends on the level of cultural pluralism in a society. While in an authoritarian or even totalitarian system there is, in its ideal form, only one instance to decide on cultural matters, a pluralistic democracy will provide a fertile ground for competing visions and claims.

This concept will be sufficiently specific, but also broad enough, for a fruitful analysis of cultural negotiations in late antique Gaza during a period when fundamental cultural preoccupations were reviewed and, as it happens, put to the test. That said, it is important to note that cultural leadership is by no means a preserve of major players only in the final centuries of the ancient world, nor is it confined to religious debate. Far from it: in classical Athens Socrates publicly called into question what the sophists were teaching to the *jeunesse dorée*, laying bare their ignorance and lack of firm knowledge; his dialectical method of philosophising not only served the quest for truth but also introduced into society a distinctive type of philosopher. Moreover, Socrates' ideal philosopher, advertised so vocally by his

disciple Plato, was a figure who would provide intellectual leadership to the polis at large and, at that, for the common good. And not least, this philosopher, as the *Republic* adumbrates, would instruct his contemporaries on how to engage with the products of Greek civilisation, from Homer's epics to music and from gymnastics to the use of rhetoric.

In this chapter, I take as a point of departure the view that Gaza at the turn of the fifth to sixth centuries was a cultural hotbed where leading figures – bishops, sophists, officials and artists, among them – found a way to negotiate their differing allegiances and world views without resorting to fierce argument and violence, as happened in other cities of the post-classical world.⁵ Recent scholarship has emphasised that, despite (or rather because of?) the encounter between Christianity and Neoplatonism, classical rhetoric and monasticism, imperial administration and local population, the city was a paragon of the smooth osmosis of classical civilisation and Christian faith; an environment in which contrasting world views were held in a beneficial balance. Against the backdrop of violent eruptions and fighting in modern Palestine and Gaza, this image may appear as wishful thinking or even a delusion. In any event, we need to assess on the basis of ancient evidence the extent to which the inhabitants of Gaza actually succeeded in bridging gulfs in the mental landscape. The following discussion aims to demonstrate that the notion of cultural leadership can enable us to better understand whether consensus in a Greek polis centred on learning was achievable and how players in the cultural domain settled tensions emerging between contradictory belief systems. To address these questions, I will examine two models of pedagogical authority in late antique Gaza both of which reflect qualms about the place of classical culture in a Christianised city. The focus will be on the textual creation, and performance, of cultural leadership in relation to the local setting.

Aeneas: the collaborative model

The first model of cultural leadership emerges from a philosophical work originating from a school context and looking back at a venerable pedigree. It was produced by the philosopher and rhetorician Aeneas of Gaza, who lived from roughly the mid-fifth century to the 520s.⁶ He is sometimes credited with being a leading figure in the so-called 'School of Gaza', although the ground for such a claim is somewhat shaky, given how little is known about this institution and its personnel.⁷ What Aeneas was interested in and taught in his school can be seen in his surviving output, which consists of a dialogue titled *Theophrastus* and a body of 25 letters addressed to various recipients, including scholars, presbyters and an architect.

These writings enable us to recognise Aeneas as a Christian intellectual immersed in classical scholarship and at the cutting edge of contemporary philosophical debate. As philosophers at that time repeatedly turned to the issue of how the physical world had come into being, Aeneas' discussion in the *Theophrastus* aimed to make a meaningful contribution to answering a still unsettled question. His dialogue covers in its main part the nature of the human soul but then extends the conversation to the creation of the world. This topic was discussed also by, among others, Zacharias of Mytilene and Procopius of Gaza, so we can infer that it occupied an important place in the philosophical milieu of Alexandria and Gaza.⁸ Both the dialogue and the letters show that their author received his intellectual formation in the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria, while the correspondence further documents the fact that Aeneas cultivated an intellectual network across Palestine and Egypt.⁹ Apparently he was a well-connected thinker, and his position in the intellectual region between Alexandria and Palestine would have appealed to many an ambitious young man considering the choice of the most suitable school.¹⁰ Unfortunately, we know virtually nothing about his teaching activity and success.

As regards Aeneas' professional commitments, his works display a strong confidence in the social value of classical education. Not only are his philosophical dialogue and letters, in style as well as content, modelled after classical predecessors, but what he discusses in his correspondence exudes the firm belief that Hellenic *paideia* as received from the great authorities of the past continued to make a difference, even under the changed conditions of the post-classical world. Addressed to equally cultivated friends and peppered with classical echoes and references, Aeneas' epistles make clear that, according to their writer, thorough rhetorical training and literary taste still served as the unifying bond of the upper class. As if nothing had changed since the time of Plato and Isocrates, the letters, most of which are concerned with intellectual life, evince great pride in the achievements of Greek thinking and writing.¹¹ In doing so, they were intended to perpetuate the legacy of the ancestral culture further down the generations. In our context, it is interesting to note that Aeneas' belief in traditional education was far from being a purely intellectual concern, without regard for the practicalities of life. Although as a Neoplatonist he was versed in the scientific reasoning about eternal ideas, he was fully aware that education in philosophy and rhetoric takes place in a physical place and, more often than not, in the environment provided by the Greek polis.

When he sent a letter to the sophist Theodore in Ionia, Aeneas, as head of a school, could not conceal his pride, perhaps with a hint of

Schadenfreude, that the renown of his teaching diverted prospective students from Athens and channelled them to Gaza instead:

And this achievement, too, is completely mine, if one believes the sons' feats are due to the father. But it is excellent about your euphony, because of which the sons of the Athenians deem it right to learn Attic style not from their fathers, but from the Syrians. At least, they now no longer sail to the Piraeus in love of the Academy or travel to the Lyceum; for they think that the Academy and the Lyceum are now among us. It is requital enough for me from you if the Ionians hail me as their ancestor because of you and, by contemplating undefiled the images of my soul, now sketch the outline of the body as well.¹²

Other letters also suggest a strong link between classical learning and the local setting, so education virtually figures as the hallmark of the polis.¹³ However, what is particularly striking here is the view that a specific type of schooling, Athenian *paideia*, has relocated to Syria, a name which at that time also encompassed Palestine with the region of Gaza. The idea that it is possible to transfer an entire intellectual cosmos, together with its pedagogical profile, to another place played such a role in Aeneas' self-image that he included it also in the opening passage of his philosophical dialogue, where the student Euxitheus is told by his friend Aegyptus that he no longer needs to travel to Athens to attend the philosophical school, because the leading philosopher, Theophrastus, has moved to Alexandria.¹⁴ The repetition of this motif in two different genres, I would like to suggest, not only makes a statement about the local dimension of teaching. More than that, it implies that, when the external conditions have changed somewhat, a recognisable intellectual paradigm can be taken out of its original context and fitted into a new environment. We may surmise that the theme of the educational 'journey', apart from its reference to late antique student and teacher mobility, was a vivid image of the adaptability of classical learning to differing contexts. Although there is clearly a relationship between a type of education and its physical location, the link is all but indissoluble.

Aeneas' *Theophrastus* is a philosophical dialogue clearly modelled on Platonic exemplars, most notably on the *Phaedrus*.¹⁵ It is crammed with allusions to and quotations taken from the famous Athenian philosopher which could hardly have escaped the readers' attention.¹⁶ Impeccably written in the elevated linguistic register of Attic prose, *Theophrastus* also includes references to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, to Herodotus, Xenophon and further classical authors.¹⁷ Obviously it targets a highbrow readership of connoisseurs who were able to detect the erudite references and could appreciate the philosophical

doctrines contained in the work. The dialogue is conducted by three participants, one of whom, Aegyptus, remains a rather shadowy figure. The title character is Theophrastus, a fictitious Neoplatonic philosopher and pagan, who has recently relocated from Athens to Alexandria. His interlocutor is the young Euxitheus, a Christian, travelling from his native Syria to Athens in order to study philosophy with famous teachers; he counts himself lucky when he learns from his fellow-student Aegyptus that the eminent philosopher has now settled on the Nile, so there is no longer any need to continue the journey to Greece. Once Aegyptus has introduced his friend to Theophrastus, a discussion unfolds on the human soul and, more fundamentally, the creation of the world, before it concludes with the doctrine of resurrection. Thus, the work combines an examination of the soul's fate before birth and after death with the controversy on whether the world, as Christians claimed, was created from a beginning or, as the Neoplatonists argued, had existed eternally. The latter topic also formed the main subject of Zacharias' dialogue *Ammonius*, which resembles the *Theophrastus* also in that it deals with the doctrine of resurrection. After the examination of various philosophers' opinions on the nature of the soul and a heated debate on the creation, Aeneas' dialogue concludes with the victory of Christian theology, although it is a theology that integrates from Neoplatonism what is in agreement with faith.¹⁸ In an extensive and continuous speech, which is only briefly interrupted by Theophrastus' replies, Euxitheus explains the relationship between body and soul, and God's creation of matter and living beings according to Christian teaching. Tellingly, the conversation ends not only in the defeat of the pagan philosopher but in a prayer to the Creator spoken by the triumphant Euxitheus, in which Theophrastus joins him.¹⁹ In what follows I will not deal with the philosophical and theological doctrines contained in the dialogue but focus instead on the ways in which intellectual authority is created and projected.²⁰

In the same way as Plato frequently did, Aeneas inserts the dialogue proper into another conversation, that between Aegyptus and the arriving Euxitheus. In this frame, we are not only told what Euxitheus wishes to learn from the Athenian philosophers but, as indicated earlier, we are also made aware of the relevance of the local setting. Since Theophrastus has moved to Egypt, Athens has now lost its former attractiveness as the centre of erudition and is replaced by the Egyptian capital. Not only that: Euxitheus' final victory over the pagan philosopher implies that philosophy will henceforth, once its champion has returned home, be situated in Syria. I would like to argue that it is not by accident that Aeneas in the opening passage highlights the geographic origin of his characters and draws our

attention to the local dimension. What he intimates by the emphasis of this otherwise unimportant detail is that the successful protagonist is his own alter ego; Euxitheus as a Christian would-be philosopher from Syria embodies what Aeneas himself is, and so his superior style of argumentation illustrates what Aeneas is teaching in Gaza. Just as the dialogue's author once travelled to Alexandria to become initiated in its famous Neoplatonic school and afterwards returned to Gaza to establish himself as head of his own school, the work outlines in brief an educational journey during which the student traveller earns himself a place in the philosophical community. And the fact that the school of Athens is now past its prime contributes to making the intellectual superiority of Aeneas' own teaching in Gaza stand out in sharp relief, in the same way as the letter quoted earlier does.²¹ The level of teaching, illustrated by the succession of schools, depends on accomplished experts such as the author himself and that is why hopeful students set out on their journey to centres of learning. In other words, Aeneas inscribes his own philosophical and pedagogical achievements in the narrative underlying the dialogue. Upon noticing the parallel between the author and the main interlocutor, an ancient reader of the *Theophrastus* is likely to have identified Euxitheus' style of argument with that of Aeneas himself.

The portrayal of the character Euxitheus, however, is but one of the building blocks in the textual creation of authority. More importantly, the way the interlocutors over the course of the conversation undertake their intellectual endeavour reveals how philosophical expertise is acted out in social relationships. After the enquiring student Euxitheus has put his initial question about the soul and its nature, Theophrastus starts teaching by compiling a veritable doxography; he introduces and reviews numerous authoritative answers from Pythagoras to Empedocles, from Plato to contemporary philosophers. In this passage, a history of Greek philosophy unfolds before our eyes, which creates the intellectual background for the dialogue taking place in Alexandria. However, Euxitheus is quick to show that all these philosophical doctrines are incompatible and sometimes in outright contradiction. With more than a hint of Socratic irony, he replies to Theophrastus' extensive philosophical review, 'You are blessed, Theophrastus, because, although many and diverse are the doctrines of ancient times, nothing has escaped your notice, but you teach everything very clearly'.²² Despite his disingenuous praise, Euxitheus remains ambivalent because what Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle teach about the nature of the soul is hardly reconcilable. Either the soul's fate here is rest from toil or a punishment, but it cannot be both. Euxitheus points out that Plato is even inconsistent in his own views, considering the soul to be driven sometimes by force,

sometimes by self-movement. Plato's inconsistency then leads him to a scathing belittlement of the Academy and a more detailed engagement with Theophrastus' Platonic teachings. Essentially, his critical engagement with classical philosophers culminates in the refutation of the most accomplished thinkers of intellectual history. In places, Euxitheus' intellectual superiority stands out when he even heaps sarcasm on the beacons of philosophy, most notably Aristotle.²³ His sudden rise from the position of a student in need of philosophical explanation to a confident and critical thinker will not have failed to make an impression on the first-time reader of the *Theophrastus*; it seems reasonable to assume that Aeneas intended to direct his audience's attention to this very turnaround, namely that Euxitheus unexpectedly assumes authority and the lead in the conversation.

What the disrespectful treatment of the ancient philosophers highlights, regardless of the propositional content, is that intellectual activity must not be content with the bare knowledge of authoritative doctrines but achieves its full potential only in independent and critical thinking, an intellectual contest Theophrastus is not willing to enter. On the one hand, philosophy is an activity which is carried out against the backdrop of a canon of classical thinkers and needs to take account of them. On the other hand, independent thinking and arguing, as Euxitheus' manner of discussion spotlights, may even include the overthrow of acknowledged intellectual heroes. In contrast, Theophrastus embodies how one ought not to practise philosophy. When Euxitheus exposes the feebleness of the arguments presented, Theophrastus makes a revealing confession, saying, 'These considerations have often weighed on my mind before this, and have threatened to alter my view. But respect for my ancestral tradition and the lack of someone to fight alongside me have hampered me and held me back'.²⁴ Even though he recognises the shortcomings of existing philosophy, he refrains from parting company with the pagan philosophers. Theophrastus is in thrall to the ancient teachers, even at the price of confusion. As Aeneas has portrayed the dialogue's characters clearly as representatives of contrasting types of philosophical activity, it seems safe to say that Theophrastus, the champion of Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism, epitomises the traditional Hellenic, and pagan, intellectualism. Clinging in reverence to the sacred authorities of the past, the pagan philosophers fail to see through the doctrines' contradictions, and even if they do, they stop short of making proper use of their reason. When subject to scrutiny, the teachings in the schools of Athens and Alexandria are doomed to failure and even ridicule.

Considering that Aeneas incorporates much material from previous philosophers and writers in his argument, one omission stands out the

more clearly: although he argues for the truth of Christian teaching on the soul and the Creation, his dialogue strikingly shuns the use of Scripture. While ancient Church Fathers frequently refer to the account found in Genesis to corroborate their argument, the Christian philosopher hardly ever alludes to the Bible. Instead, he argues for theological doctrine in terms of traditional philosophy.²⁵ None the less, the end of the dialogue makes crystal clear that Aeneas takes his stand firmly on the ground of the Biblical account. Eventually, it is this theological foundation that defeats the Greek thinkers of the past. After Euxitheus has refuted and marginalised the Neoplatonic claims to authority, he replaces their inconsistent arguments with his superior insight, at first drawing on the experience of an old, devout man whom he claims to have met. He summarises the brief narrative about him with the comment, 'He could not have done such a thing if he had embraced false doctrine; but, having learned the word from God, with God's aid he brings the word to action'.²⁶ The old man, Theophrastus hears, serves as witness to the fact that there is an absolute measure by which to judge whether an opinion is true or false. To hammer this message home, Aeneas has the pagan philosopher then ask, 'But tell me, where do the wise get the learning through which they convince by action what they first teach by words?' Euxitheus replies that any true teaching is not based on human intellectual ability but on God's wisdom alone, and Theophrastus cannot help but agree:

I am convinced. I now feel the kindness of God. Farewell, Academy: let us go to Him. Plato himself bids us obey Plato only until someone appears wiser than he.²⁷ And nothing is wiser than God.²⁸

The intellectual superiority of Aeneas' model philosopher finally emerges as the power of human reason guided by divine authority. Only the foundation in divine wisdom can guarantee that the philosopher's teachings are consistent and convincing. This implies that the true philosopher is not merely an intellectual figure but also a spiritual leader, an authority who is capable of advising others on Christian doctrine and worship. Consequently, the act of philosophical persuasion naturally leads to prayer, as Euxitheus finally prays for purification of their mind and, in Platonic vein, becoming like God.

Understandably, Euxitheus has a very strong opinion about knowledge. Knowledge, he insists, has to fulfil the criterion of consistency and, thus, does not allow of any slight contradiction. He replies to Theophrastus,

But now having met you and marvelling at the wisdom manifest in you, I wonder still more that, having grasped this fact so

thoroughly, you are still prepared to share confusion with Pythagoras, Plato, the Chaldaeans and the Egyptians, who do not say the same things among themselves. It is a sign of inexperience to articulate contradictory propositions, not a sign of knowledge, and, as it would seem, God is not the instigator of this philosophical doctrine – for surely then the same position would be adopted by everyone – but instead it is some human opinion, in which many opposite positions variously appear.²⁹

The teacher's task is to examine what has previously been put forward by others and to look out for any pitfalls in the argumentation in order to reach a conclusive answer; for according to Euxitheus, *aporia*, the state of perplexity, cannot be a satisfying end in itself. The only way for knowledge to be sufficient is if it is generated under divine guidance. Furthermore, Euxitheus rejects force and necessity in argumentation, favouring instead persuasion and independent thinking as the pathway to insight. 'And what', he asks, 'would virtue amount to for a soul compelled to serve? For nothing imposed by force is a very good lesson nor is anything which comes about by necessity a suitable subject for commendation'.³⁰ Knowledge can only be established by dialogue and the joint scrutiny of ideas. Although the truth coming from God's word compellingly removes any doubt, it can, and should be, argued for, which is why the *Theophrastus* in the end depicts agreement instead of enforcement. Needless to say, this image of how a debate is to be conducted is idealised.³¹

Evidently, the dialogue form is essential to Aeneas' vision of intellectual progress. While Plato's dialogues characteristically end in *aporia*, to stimulate further reflection, Theophrastus concludes with the affirmation of indisputable knowledge, though a knowledge gained by joint search. Teaching authority, as the course of the dialogue reveals, manifests itself in the critical examination and, if necessary, refutation of others' hypotheses, that is, in an intellectual exchange across the centuries. It is worth mentioning here that the conversation begins in shared values, in the common love for Platonic philosophy, but soon Euxitheus appropriates the role of the teacher, now himself directing the deposed professor Theophrastus; he is also in command of all necessary forms of argumentation, such as syllogism, proof and even Platonic mythmaking. The reversal of roles visible in the dialogue allows us to see Euxitheus as an accomplished dialectical philosopher, who builds his authority on interaction. We will not go wrong if we then understand the development of the conversation as an enactment of cultural leadership.

Finally, the conclusion to the dialogue underlines what the type of intellectual authority Euxitheus is practising can yield. Testing and

refuting earlier philosophy does not automatically imply that one dismisses its doctrines lock, stock and barrel. Other than that, critical engagement with pagan philosophy will elucidate what is compatible with Christian dogma and can be incorporated into Christian theory. It is certainly no coincidence that Aeneas chose to present the meeting in Alexandria in the guise of a conversion dialogue, evoking the tradition of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, Cicero's *Hortensius* and Minucius Felix's *Octavius*. This literary form was the perfect choice for presenting how dialectical thinking can lead to a new state of mind and how one intellectual system is superseded by another.³² It was not a dialogue for the dialogue's sake but a literary conversation that forcefully demonstrated the superiority of the Christian cause. The burning question of the immortality of the soul, together with its corollaries, is particularly suitable for demonstrating that Neoplatonism, if stripped of its religious claims and freed from contradiction, can fruitfully combine with teachings inspired by God. As numerous Greek philosophers had tackled this problem, the fresh look from a Christian perspective in *Theophrastus* was meant to be a showcase for the right way to establish cultural authority on contested and slippery ground. Promoting Aeneas' vision of leadership, it offered guidance on the potential clash between education and faith. It seems that his type of learning, the productive combination of classical *paideia* with theological expertise, appealed to cultivated contemporaries. One of Aeneas' letters, addressed to a cleric called Sarapion, documents that when dispute and fighting arose in the Church, even churchmen turned to the philosopher Aeneas as an authoritative figure to give advice on their disagreement.³³

The 'Two Old Men': the top-down model

Now let us take the road into a completely different world, which opened up just five miles south-west of Aeneas' school in Gaza. There, close to the village of Tawatha, the abbot Seridus in the 520s founded a cenobium, a monastic community that was part of a dense circle of monasteries around Gaza.³⁴ Recent scholarship has intensely studied the monasticism of the Gaza region and established its characteristics, among others the close link with Egyptian asceticism.³⁵ Seridus' monastery not only consisted of accommodation for the brothers and later a hospital but was surrounded by hermits' cells, two of which were inhabited by, as they are called in the ancient texts, Two Old Men, Barsanuphius and John.³⁶ These two saintly men observed rigid asceticism and sought to close off any direct contact with other people. Never leaving their cells, they even reduced the communication with their brothers to a minimum in order not to be distracted from their devotion to God. However, their life of seclusion

was not completely without communication for, according to the ancient tradition, they were unceasingly approached by a crowd of petitioners who presented their requests in writing and likewise received the answers in letter form. Interestingly enough, the droves of people coming to the monastery to a certain extent mirror the composition of society at that time, ranging from bishops to slave-owners and from scholars to people active in business life. And their requests are as various as their social background and ages, though the greatest part of the concerns have to do with Christian conduct in day-to-day life, including legal matters, dealings with magistrates and illnesses. We should also note that Seridus' cenobium was situated in such proximity to other monastic settlements, villages and the city of Gaza that various groups of people could easily make their way to the two hermits; the monasticism of Gaza, thus, was not one of total withdrawal from the world but in constant exchange with lay society.³⁷ Moreover, the boundaries between monasteries and cities in the region were remarkably permeable, permitting a free flow of communication between the monastic cells, villages and towns.

Despite its remarkable setting, the two monks' activity has attracted strong interest only in recent years. This is still more surprising when we take into account that a massive body of 850 letters directed by the hermits to a wide range of recipients survives in several manuscripts. The collection, which represents one of the largest transmitted in ancient epistolary writing, was put together by a monk of Seridus' community around the mid-sixth century.³⁸ This testifies to the already extraordinary popularity of Barsanuphius and John in their lifetime and to the significance accorded to their responses. The monastic compiler – who claims to have seen Barsanuphius on one occasion himself – not only included the answers in the collection but also provided information on the questions, sometimes even inserting a brief narrative. When, for instance, a layperson suffered from severe fever and asked the Old Man to pray for him, the collection relates at some length how the prayer made the fever subside and how it attacked the man once again after he had gossiped about the healing, until, after a second response or rather rebuke by the monk, the man was completely cured.³⁹ Unfortunately, the compilation keeps quiet about most of the petitioners, identifying them generically as 'brother', 'bishop', 'layman' and so forth. The redaction, certainly meant to increase the relevance and applicability of the letters, severely limits their usefulness as historical evidence; however, the information provided still allows important insights into the ways in which sixth-century Palestinian monks interacted with various people and into the everyday concerns of laypeople in the post-classical world. Occasionally, though, the anonymous compiler indicates which

letters belong to the same person, so we can reconstruct how addressees reacted to the letters and how far what the two men recommended was put into practice. What the monastic community intended with the collection and presumable publication of the epistles becomes evident already from their place in the system of literary genres. For although classified as letters and titled as such in the manuscripts,⁴⁰ the pieces simultaneously belong to a second generic tradition: throughout, they are presented in question-and-answer form and thus bear a close resemblance to the form of *erotapokriseis*, which enjoyed popularity among Christian authors.⁴¹ The form of presentation reveals the didactic purpose and, in doing so, enhances the pedagogical or protreptic character that the letters' content unmistakably display.

The monasteries in the vicinity of Gaza have been termed a 'school of Christianity', and that label, if taken in broad terms, has some justification⁴² for the monks sometimes draw parallels to teachers and students, and even refer metaphorically to their own instruction as teaching the alphabet.⁴³ Building on the familiar notion of Christ as teacher, the Two Old Men themselves assume the position of someone whose main concern is the formation of others' minds and characters.⁴⁴ More fundamentally, a school-like character is suggested by the topics covered in the answers. All letters are concerned with giving advice and offering guidance on spiritual matters as well as worldly affairs. Most of them deal with questions of proper behaviour and action, but the monks also give counsel on matters of doctrine and orthodoxy. Essentially, Barsanuphius and John's correspondence amounts to a 'how-to' handbook on the day-to-day actions of brothers and laymen alike, from the appropriate diet for monks (63) to buying goods from pagans (777). The bottom line of the spiritual direction is the conviction that everyone is in need of advice, except God alone.⁴⁵ Whatever one contemplates doing or saying, one first of all ought to approach someone who is advanced in perfection and so able to prevent mistakes. The letter collection is pervaded by the acknowledgement of human fallibility and limits but also takes into account the possibility of moral and intellectual progress. Since the overall aim is to align one's life, regardless of one's profession – hence the wide spectrum of walks of life in the collection – to the ideal of the monk, it is first and foremost the ascetics, not only the Two Old Men but also the Fathers of bygone days, that command a wide-ranging expertise on all kinds of thoughts and activities. As they have already entered on the path to perfection and the imitation of Christ they can draw others to the same goal. It is then essential for the success of their teaching that they do not confine their lessons to verbal instruction but, by their ascetic withdrawal, serve as role

models, already practising what others are supposed to aspire to.⁴⁶

What is essential for the success of spiritual instruction is that the teachers cater for all levels of understanding. As the prologue to the collection highlights, the essential asset of the Old Men's advice is that they are able to adapt their teachings to the different intellectual and spiritual needs of their petitioners⁴⁷:

not all the same teachings are suitable for everyone. Just as in the ages of the body, different foods are appropriate for the breast-feeding child, for the adolescent and for the elderly, the same also happens in the spiritual stages. Often, these elders responded to questions bearing in mind the weakness in the thoughts of the persons inquiring, discreetly condescending to their level in order that those asking might not fall into despair, just as we find in the *Lives of the Old Men*.

The pedagogical setting of the correspondence brings us to the first component of the hermits' leadership, to the way the lessons are communicated to the recipients. To put it in Marshall McLuhan's famous words, the medium is the message. It is vital for the reception of the commands that the answers are not given in face-to-face conversation but channelled through written missives taken by the abbot Seridus from the hermits' cells to the waiting petitioners.⁴⁸ The abbot was the only person permitted to communicate with Barsanuphius. None of the advice seekers would encounter the Old Man in person, which, one letter tells us, at one point caused confusion among them because some raised doubts as to whether Barsanuphius actually existed or was just made up by Seridus.⁴⁹ Considering the peculiar communication process, which created the need for letter writing in the first place, we should not stretch the parallel with the schools too far because, before the invention of distance learning, schooling in the strict sense required the co-presence of teachers and learners. However, putting aside the almost post-modern deconstruction of authority in this unique piece, it is safe to say that the mediated communication through letters created a feel of distance and hierarchy, removing any element of spontaneous and easily accessible interaction. The result is that the communication, despite the two-way exchange of written texts, seems rather a one-way relationship, in stark contrast to the epistolary ideology of reciprocity. The roles of adviser and advice seeker are clearly marked, and guidance is provided in an irreversible top-down process in which the expert is speaking *ex cathedra*. While Aeneas' *Theophrastus* foregrounds learning as a collaborative process, Barsanuphius and John pursue the opposite path, ruling out any real-life interaction. To put it differently, the Old Men's seclusion is not only a mode of life

conducive to spiritual perfection but also a strategy of self-fashioning: the recluses create an aura of inaccessible authority around themselves.

That Barsanuphius and John aim for this image deliberately is indicated by explicit assertions of their authority. Often they present themselves as fathers of their petitioners, who devote themselves to caring for others, thereby evoking the hierarchy within the family context.⁵⁰ Even more self-confidently, they claim to follow Christ himself, whom the letters repeatedly introduce as the model teacher. And in an extremely bold move, John dares to adopt the role of God's mouthpiece, saying, 'The elder has spoken the truth because he speaks from God'.⁵¹ Although adding a remark about his own uncertainty about the truth, the monk takes a firm line on the unconditional trust that the advice seeker is supposed to have in him. Peter Brown in a seminal article has shown how the idea of the 'Holy Man' pervaded Christian discourse in late antiquity.⁵² I would like to argue that Barsanuphius and John, though they do not fit this pattern in all aspects, bear a close resemblance to those saintly figures who enjoyed a huge popularity during this period.⁵³ Ascetics, most notably in Syria, acted as mediators between local communities and God, thereby fulfilling an important social function in the unstable world of late antiquity. While classical institutions were eroding, the holy men, although standing outside society, intervened on behalf of villagers in everyday affairs and so became important negotiators in village life. For the ordinary people of the Greek East, it was such patron-like saints who brought the holy into the world.

The constant flow of people from Gaza and the surrounding villages to the anchorites' cells is a clear sign of the need at the time to gain personal access to the divine and, furthermore, for the need for leadership amid the uncertainties of post-classical society. Through strategic self-fashioning, which comprises verbal and non-verbal modes alike, the Old Men establish their teaching charisma as the basis of their leadership as mediators.⁵⁴ Their claim to spiritual authority rests primarily on the notion that they have already attained a degree of perfection to which others aspire and on their recognition by others as saintly men. And certainly their qualities as spiritual directors are further enhanced by the institutional setting, as the monastery at Tawatha was a gathering of disciples such as Dorotheus and abbot Seridus himself, who displayed their commitment to their teachers in front of the visitors. The monastery institutionalised a network of spiritual direction which, in a dynamic process, as Hevelone-Harper points out, not only connected several fathers and monks but also extended to bishops and laypeople as receivers of spiritual guidance.⁵⁵

To take this a step further, let us examine the way the letters present the advice. Strikingly, despite their feelings of paternal care, the Old Men take full advantage primarily of the absolute power exerted by fathers in their families. Time and again, they are not content with just giving counsel but also address the way they communicate their guidance. To enforce their instructions the anchorites couch them as commands and orders, sometimes even pointing out the difference between the two categories (368–369). In some places, these reflections are called forth by the petitioners' doubts about the extent to which they are supposed to carry out the commands and what they are to do in case of a clash of obligations. The occasional uneasiness of the questioners gives the monks the opportunity to set out in more detail the binding nature of their guidance and the obedience owed by the advice seekers.⁵⁶ When, for instance, a brother approached John with a question about his own thoughts the monk replied that the thought 'does not persist without reason, but because you did not purely and carefully apply the command that you heard. So you ought to correct your fault and apply whatever you heard with purity'.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the Two Old Men pronounce commands, orders, prohibitions and bans, and even dictate letters to the petitioner to urge others to carry out some action.⁵⁸

Throughout the letter collection we find explicit discussion of authority and hierarchy, as well as reflection on proper obedience and doubt. The performance of teaching charisma is greatly enhanced by Christian virtue, as the moral code puts humility centre stage.⁵⁹ As the ascetic core virtue, humility operates across the levels of the network of teachers and disciples; it furnishes the hermits with an excellent lever for the enforcement of their orders. This becomes particularly apparent from Seridus' position in the network because he, acting as abbot, instructor and mediator himself, displays proper reverence and humility towards Barsanuphius when he willingly submits himself as a son to the Old Man.⁶⁰ Devout humility is also exploited to great effect when Barsanuphius admonishes a brother:

Be careful not to take joy in counting yourself as being someone; but show obedience, which dispels the contentiousness that is hateful to God and to those who love him. And hold to the obedience that leads up to heaven and renders those who acquire it like the Son of God.⁶¹

He even goes so far as to request a prostration from a brother, who wants to receive some command, both before and after the answer (369). Consequently, no one who approaches the hermits is in the dark about the pedagogical hierarchy and the obligations involved in

it.⁶²

A fine example of the performance of spiritual authority is one occasion when a monk, who held the position of a deacon in Seridus' cenobium, ventured to challenge Barsanuphius' leadership and the hierarchy in the community.⁶³ It is worth mentioning in our context that the incident was related (though not directly) to a question about education, as the deacon, obviously not a Greek, raised doubts about whether it was necessary to learn the Psalms in Greek.⁶⁴ While the deacon in this particular case did not question the Old Man's command, on another occasion he did not acquiesce. His other interactions with the holy men illuminate his resentment of the hierarchy of communication and power in Tawatha. After he had written to John about ascetic discipline but was not satisfied with his answer, the deacon turned directly to Barsanuphius, who used his letter to set out the communication flow in the monastery⁶⁵:

Brother, since you have asked to hear from me who am worthless on the matter of your thoughts, could it be that you were not satisfied with what you heard from brother John? [...] These things have been dictated by me for you, and written down by means of my son [Seridus]. So then, unless you happen to face some spiritual warfare that tries to render vain the words which I have spoken to you for the sake of God, I pray that God may lead you to greater progress and that you may not be estranged or separated from us, whether in this age or in the age to come.

Asserting that his commands came from God, Barsanuphius urged the deacon to accept the order of spiritual authority in which the Old Man and the abbot act as intermediaries between God and the advice seeker. The deacon, however, did not give up his attempt to circumvent Seridus and get direct access to Barsanuphius, and even accused the abbot of forging responses in the Old Man's name. This critical moment in the development of the network of spiritual direction caused Barsanuphius to abandon for once the established pattern of communication. He told the abbot to stand by his cell door and repeat in a loud voice what had been dictated to him. In doing so, Seridus would allow both the doubting deacon and the Old Man to hear the actual words that he had written down. Although not granting the addressee the privilege of direct oral communication, Barsanuphius by this extraordinary change sought to dispel the deacon's doubts and, at the same time, reinforce the order of authority in the monastery.⁶⁶ However, further letters show that the addressee was anything but prepared to accommodate to the hierarchy and continued trying to bypass the abbot. His distrust prompted him to long for further direct personal contact with the Old Man. Although

the assembled letters do not reveal whether the problems in their relationship were ever solved, they shine light on the enactment of teaching authority in the monastic community. In similar fashion to Aeneas' dialogue, the letters give a glimpse into the ways in which leadership is created, negotiated and acted out in a pedagogical exchange. Crucially, authority here is firmly established through regulated and mediated communication, instead of face-to-face dialogue.

We have seen that in Aeneas' creation of cultural leadership it was vital to engage with classical authorities, either refuting or following them. In similar fashion, the Two Old Men draw on certain key figures in order to establish their own expertise, though with a striking difference. Certainly, their leadership is partly based on resources that reside in themselves, namely personal charisma and superior insight, because they have already made progress on the path to perfection. But they likewise rely on external elements of authority. For one thing, they refer to the asceticism of Abba Isaiah, an Egyptian monk who brought about a decisive shift in Gaza monasticism in the second half of the fifth century.⁶⁷ Isaiah lived in physical isolation near Tawatha, communicating with those who sought his guidance through a disciple. His cell became the seed of a cenobium which was under his spiritual direction. Further, Barsanuphius' and John's letters are interspersed with references to Scripture and verbatim quotations, so the lessons are in accordance with divine teachings. In the exchange with the deacon just mentioned, for instance, Barsanuphius, in order to quell the addressee's disbelief, compares him to the Pharisees who demand a sign from Jesus.⁶⁸ The recourse to Scripture is then supplemented by numerous references to the *Sayings of the Fathers*, a collection of useful instructions by Egyptian monks probably compiled in sixth-century Palestine and the most important source on emerging monasticism.⁶⁹ The hermits' correspondence thus gives the impression that the teachings are firmly rooted in the traditions of the Church and monasticism and that the teachers are in command of the essential doctrines. The *Sayings of the Fathers* also offer a literary model of teaching the ascetic ideology to laypeople, not least in their wide applicability to various contexts and situations.⁷⁰ In contrast to Aeneas' dialogue, the Old Men's is a completely affirmative engagement with tradition. Furthermore, the letters are marked by one conspicuous absence. Just as the *Theophrastus* avoids any overt reference to the Bible, the Two Old Men nowhere draw on secular culture and classical literature. Even though a great proportion of their instructions parallel those of traditional Greek morality, the letters turn a blind eye to what is outside the Christian faith. They take great pains to exclude all that appears to be secular. This

observation ties in with the stylistic presentation of the answers: Barsanuphius and John brush aside any rules of the elevated register so carefully observed by philosophers and orators, and make free use of non-classical words and phrases. They freely employ, as people in everyday conversation did, but no writer of stylistic ambition would have done, Latin loan words like *kellion* and *kellarios*.⁷¹ And even in responses to educated men the anchorites do not resort to classical paraphrase for Christian terminology, so well known from the manifesto of Atticism. Instead of the framework of Hellenic education, an exclusively Christian foundation, and a determinedly ascetic one at that, buttresses the monks' leadership, which seeks to set an ascetic agenda for the society at large.

But there is more to this point than just stylistic taste or the denigration of secular concerns. Hand in hand with the dismissal of classical style guides goes a markedly anti-intellectual bias.⁷² Here we should briefly recall that the letters were directed not exclusively to uneducated villagers and farmers, nor were they confined to instruction on behaviour and ethical formation. Among the petitioners were also clerics with a classical upbringing, philosophers, sophists and people from Gaza who had evidently received traditional training in the schools. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the hermits' addressees to some extent overlapped with the intended readership of writers such as Aeneas and Procopius and the audiences of Choricus' speeches. So, we can surmise that educated inhabitants of Gaza from time to time entered the monastic world of Tawatha, so different from their usual environment of the Greek polis. The letters often reflect the encounter of these two worlds or cultural systems as they talk about the tensions arising from the competing demands of secular life and Christian faith, of course with the message that secular culture and requirements ought to be subordinated to what religion demands.⁷³ Against this backdrop, it is no wonder that the letters repeatedly deal with matters of formal education.⁷⁴ In general, they not only suggest that it is completely superfluous to pay attention to classical education but decry any formal knowledge as useless and even dangerous. When a layman asked whether he should correct someone who makes a linguistic mistake in conversation, the monk warned him to eschew vainglory and recommended the safe course of silence (722). Furthermore, the hermits were deeply suspicious about the academic advancement of a philosopher because they envisaged the petitioner falling into arrogance.⁷⁵ Both instances show that the Old Men were fully aware, and critical, of the use of education to distinguish oneself and enhance social differences; they sought to eradicate the ramifications of Hellenic erudition that were detrimental to humility.

Evidence for the complicated relationship between Seridus'

community and classical education can be found in the life of Dorotheus, the most famous of the Old Men's disciples.⁷⁶ Brought up in an affluent Greek family and well trained in rhetoric, Dorotheus was a glittering prospect for a successful career, the more so as he had also acquired considerable medical skills. However, this intelligent and idealistic young man at some point heard the call of ascetic contemplation and renounced the worldly realm. In his zeal for rigorous asceticism, Dorotheus joined the community under the spiritual direction of Barsanuphius and John. Although he was to some extent prepared to abandon his material possessions, he continued to make good use of his education and skills in Seridus' cenobium. The abbot recognised that Dorotheus' gifts would serve the monastery well and made him head of the infirmary; in this position, Dorotheus had the use of his own medical books, which he had transferred to the library of the monastery. His skills in rhetoric and communication were not lost, either, as he was promoted to the rank of John's disciple and put in charge of communicating the Other Old Man's instructions through letters to the petitioners.

The letters relating to Dorotheus and his own writings clearly show that he himself advanced to the rank of a spiritual leader who took care of other brothers.⁷⁷ And yet, despite the usefulness of his elite background for the running of the monastery, it seems that the very same qualities led to serious tensions within the community. We learn that Dorotheus was even subjected to verbal and physical abuse by the other brothers, a clear sign that he did not fit in socially.⁷⁸ The brothers' hostility cannot be attributed to one single reason, but Dorotheus' intelligence and education may have played an important part in it. What Dorotheus' case perfectly encapsulates is that the high wall erected in the letters between monastic culture and classical *paideia* was in fact not as insurmountable as the Old Men want their readers to believe.⁷⁹ Recent scholarship has pointed out that the prevailing image of Eastern monasticism as untouched by Greek philosophy and literature is based on a too straightforward reading of the monastic texts. Careful analysis against the background of Greek ethics and didactic forms shows that hagiographies and the *Apophthegmata Patrum* drew on the classical heritage to further the spiritual advancement of their readers.⁸⁰ Dorotheus' progress, with the help of classical education, from novice to spiritual director is evidence that monasticism and *paideia* were not mutually exclusive, though they had strained relations at times.

More importantly, the Two Old Men even seek to impose restrictions on the religious knowledge of their recipients. One visitor asks whether it is always a good thing to tell others about good stories found in Scripture and in the *Lives of the Fathers*. Unexpectedly,

Barsanuphius is far from applauding the petitioner for studying the textbooks of an ascetic life. Quite the reverse, he replies with quotations from Scripture that one must bear in mind the limits of one's own understanding. Silence is always good and admirable, as the Fathers honoured and loved silence. Since we are not perfect, Barsanuphius advises the man, let us speak about those things which contribute to edification, namely, from the *Sayings of the Fathers*, rather than risking our souls by using accounts from Scripture. For this matter contains a risk for someone who does not understand; the words of Scripture have been spoken spiritually, and a fleshly person will not be able to discern their spiritual truths.⁸¹

On another occasion, when someone was talking about the *Lives of the Fathers* and their *Sayings*, Barsanuphius warned him of arrogance and reminded him of his insufficient progress, exhorting him to humility instead (689). In a striking parallel to Aeneas' *Theophrastus* that places the letters in the same cultural environment as the dialogue, the Two Old Men are asked to provide guidance on the right stance on the pre-existence of the soul and human nature after resurrection. It comes as no surprise that they first refuse to discuss these topics and urge the correspondent to observe humility, instead of musing on theological questions.⁸² The letters' bottom line is that the study of theological issues should be exclusively reserved for the experienced and perfect ascetic.⁸³ Independent study of Scripture is considered by the anchorites likely to inject dangerous heresy into the hearts of believers unfamiliar with its spiritual interpretation (469, 697).⁸⁴ Given this restriction, we should be cautious about adopting the label of a 'school' too readily, as the ascetics aim at anything but the intellectual development of their disciples.

The main goal concerning formal knowledge seems to be that no one should trust in his knowledge and intellectual abilities. Otherwise he will be led astray by false beliefs and put his spiritual perfection at risk. John does not leave any doubt on this issue, explaining to a brother,

knowledge falsely so called is trusting in one's own thought that things are exactly as they appear to us. One who wishes to be delivered of this should not trust in one's own thought, but [always] ask one's elder. [...] The elder has spoken the truth because he speaks from God.⁸⁵

Unequivocally, the hermits make clear that true knowledge and wisdom is reserved for those who have already made progress towards perfection, while the others ought to carry out what the fathers have ordered. The collection of correspondence, then, seems to promote a coherent view of knowledge: that it is exclusive and esoteric, being

the preserve of spiritual experts. Barsanuphius and John create a yawning gap between those who have understanding and those who do not. Consequently, knowledge is imparted in a top-down process, with the intellectual leaders restricting deeper insight to themselves (652). By limiting access to knowledge, the hermits use it as an instrument of control and dominance, what might be termed *Herrschaftswissen* (knowledge for the sake of domination). The image of Barsanuphius' authoritative style that emerges from the letters is a far cry from the idealised picture of monastic open-mindedness in Gaza given in Zacharias of Mytilene's *Life of Isaiah*, where the author has Aeneas conversing with the ascetic about philosophical questions concerning Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. There Isaiah explains to his interlocutor the meaning of the philosophical passages and restores the truth of Christian teaching in dialogue.⁸⁶ The letter collection, by contrast, propagates a strict rule of spiritual directors over the thoughts and lives of their followers.

Two rival approaches to education

In the Christianised society of sixth-century Gaza, education was a central concern which was addressed by philosophers, rhetoricians, clergy, anchorites and various members of the urban population. The evidence relating to questions of instruction shows that there was in particular a need to find a balance between secular and sacred elements of teaching, as people looked for guidance on how to satisfy the demands of both.⁸⁷ Within this single cultural cosmos, we have encountered two contrasting attitudes to education, one in the context of a traditional school, the other situated in a monastic community. The discourse on knowledge and instruction gave rise to two models of cultural authority, both of which claimed to formulate definitive answers to the question as to whether it was feasible to integrate secular culture and Christian faith.

The consensual or collaborative model of cultural leadership emerges from Aeneas' dialogue *Theophrastus*. It displays a dialogic and discursive nature, nicely encapsulated in its literary form. The essential characteristic is that the roles in the discourse are not fixed from the outset but result from a process of interaction, joint intellectual effort and negotiation. Accordingly, authority needs to rest on reasoning and 'research' because it aims at common consent, which can only be reached by rational persuasion. Tailoring intellectual authority to suit himself, Aeneas offers a cultural vision that can settle one of the major questions of the time, namely, the integration of the assets of Neoplatonism into a Christian framework. His idea of the permeability of cultures can be seen as inherently linked to the consensual and inclusive model of leadership. Having said that, we

need to acknowledge that, despite its embrace of the classical tradition and consensual approach, the *Theophrastus* is adamant that the ultimate foundation of human knowledge is God's wisdom. Aeneas' cultural leadership, thus, makes a strong case for the subservience of Hellenic *paideia* to Christian faith.

The alternative, top-down model of cultural authority is established by the hermits' responses to brothers, clerics and laypeople. Strikingly, the answers dispensed to a wide range of petitioners clearly document that in the ecosystem of Gaza people repeatedly experienced clashes of competing demands and were unsure about the appropriate way to deal with such tensions; in their desire for guidance they turned to the anchorites' cells, thereby acknowledging the monks' leadership. When addressing issues of formal education and ethical formation, Barsanuphius and John hold a view about imparting knowledge and insight that is completely different from Aeneas'. By rigidly limiting access to formal knowledge, they set up an exclusive or even esoteric type of leadership, with the teacher's role reserved for a small body of charismatic figures, while disciples are urged to show humility and obedience. Their model betrays the marks of a strict hierarchy, characterised by a divide between those who offer authoritative guidance and those who seek advice. What the hermits are aiming at is the creation of a new, Christian leadership of culturally competent men who have all embraced the ascetic ideal. Once again, the leadership model is inseparable from its literary presentation, namely correspondence in question-and-answer form. Moreover, the monks' robust stance on teaching authority matches their view of culture, because the pedagogic superiority of the ascetics to those who are still lagging behind on the road to perfection mirrors the subordination of secular culture to the demands of faith.

I would like to argue that the two complementary models reflect the specific conditions of their local setting. Gaza with its multifaceted culture, its rich history as a Greek polis and the interplay between numerous walks of life proved a fertile ground for testing the compatibility of cultural systems, offering the opportunity to work out whether the claim to cultural leadership would resonate with the people. In the face of the cultural pluralism characteristic of Gaza, the two models of leadership represent different mechanisms to deal with contentious pedagogic questions so that potentially divisive issues did not undermine the foundations of the cultural ecosystem. Studying the creation of cultural leadership, therefore, allows us insight into the balancing act of cultural negotiations and the rifts lurking beneath the seemingly smooth surface of the permeability that has been ascribed to Gaza in late antiquity.

Notes

- 1 Authors from sixth-century Gaza have been studied in recent years, for instance Aeneas by Champion (2014b) and Choricus by Penella *et al.* (2009). In particular, the so-called School of Gaza has attracted interest. See the contributions in Lauritzen, Corcella and Amato (2017).
- 2 The case for cultural harmony and permeability in Gaza has been made by Ashkenazi (2004, 206–207); Sivan (2008, 346–347); and, most recently, Champion (2014b), who argues for ‘a set of cultures in transition, mutually constituting and transforming each other through a fugal pattern of exchange, adaptation, conflict, and collaboration’ (197). See also Champion (2013) on the Gazans’ transformation of classical genres for Christian ends. Hevelone-Harper (2005, 118) concludes that ‘[t]he citizens of sixth-century Gaza lived in a world governed by multiple value systems’.
- 3 See Stenger (2010).
- 4 In the cultural and creative sectors nowadays, cultural leadership is defined in terms different from those outlined here. There, it concerns managing cultural organisations competently with regard to finances, legal framework and staffing.
- 5 See Tiersch (2008) on Gaza as a polis in transition and the major figures in the city.
- 6 Evidence on his life and career is scarce. See Seitz (1892, 23–27), Wacht (1969, 15–17) and Champion (2014b, 9–11).
- 7 The label was introduced by Seitz (1892) in his doctoral thesis. For the debate see Champion (2014b, 29) and contributions in Lauritzen, Corcella and Amato (2017).
- 8 Zacharias of Mytilene, *Ammonius* and Procopius, *Commentary on Genesis* (PG 87.1, 29–33). It is worth mentioning here also John of Gaza’s ecphrasis of a cosmic panel, the description of a wall-painting or mosaic probably in the baths at Gaza. The debate on the creation of the cosmos among the Alexandrian and Gazan philosophical community has recently been studied by Champion (2014b).
- 9 Aeneas indicates that he had studied in Alexandria (*Letter* 15). For Aeneas’ epistolary network see Ruffini (2004).
- 10 See Renaut (2007) on the intellectual relationship between late antique Gaza and Alexandria.
- 11 See, for instance, *Letters* 15, 17 and 18.
- 12 Aeneas, *Letter* 18: [...] πάντως ἐμὸν καὶ τοῦτο, εἶγε τὰ τῶν παίδων καλὰ τοῦ πατρὸς εἶναι νομίζεται. ἀλλ’ εὗγε τῆς ὑμετέρας εὐφωνίας, δι’ ἣν τῶν Ἀθηναίων οἱ παῖδες οὐ παρὰ τῶν πατέρων, παρὰ δὲ τῶν Σύρων ἀττικίζειν ἀξιοῦσι μανθάνειν· οὐκέτι γοῦν εἰς τὸν Πειραιᾶ καταίρουσι τῆς Ἀκαδημείας ἐρῶντες οὐδὲ φοιτῶσι παρὰ τὸ Λύκειον, παρ’ ἡμῖν τὴν Ἀκαδημειαν καὶ τὸ Λύκειον εἶναι νομίζοντες. ἐγὼ γοῦν ἱκανὰς ἔχω παρ’ ὑμῶν τὰς ἀμοιβάς, εἰ κάμῃ πρόγονον δι’ ὑμᾶς ἄσουσιν Ἰωνες καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς τὰς εἰκόνας καθαρῶς θεωροῦντες ἥδη καὶ τοῦ σώματος τὸ εἶδος ὑπογράφουσιν [...] Aeneas’ letters are quoted here from the edition of Massa Positano (1962).
- 13 See *Letter* 2 to Cassus about education as a hallmark of the cities and *Letter* 17 to the sophist Dionysius.
- 14 *Theophrastus* 3.4–3.8. Earlier in the same work (2), Aeneas introduces the link between education and the local setting. Interestingly, the idea that truly Athenian learning can no longer be found in Athens herself, but only elsewhere, is not Aeneas’ own. It had been formulated before by Synesius and was part of the nostalgic longing for classical Athens and the lament over the city’s cultural decline. See Synesius, *Letter* 54. The notion of the decline suffered by the

- Athenian education system is widespread among rhetoricians, philosophers and Church Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries. Cf. Lib. Or. 1.16–1.17 and 53; Marin. VP 10. See Stenger (forthcoming).
- 15 The work cannot be dated with certainty. However, a terminus post quem seems to be 484, as can be inferred from a historical reference in the final part. Cf. Wacht (1969, 18, n. 17). See now the essay by Cameron (2014) on the use of the dialogue form in late antiquity, in particular in Christian discourse.
 - 16 For the most important references, see Gertz, Dillon and Russell (2012, 5–6) and Champion (2014a, 264–265).
 - 17 Cf. Gertz, Dillon and Russell (2012, 4–5). Storvick (1968) provides a linguistic analysis of the *Theophrastus* in order to determine Aeneas' place in the Atticist movement.
 - 18 Letter 21 to the presbyter Dorotheus is emblematic for Aeneas' attitude to learning. There he approves of the recipient's advance from one sanctuary to another, that is, from philosophy to priesthood.
 - 19 As the dialogue aptly opens with a quotation from Plato's *Phaedrus*, so this prayer is an echo of Socrates' prayer to Pan and the other gods in Plat. *Phdr.* 279c.
 - 20 See Wacht (1969) and Champion (2014a) on Aeneas' engagement with Platonic arguments in his discussion of the creation of the cosmos.
 - 21 Cf. Wear (2013, 152–153), who understands this passage rather as dismissal of Hellenic learning in favour of a Christian theory of the universe.
 - 22 *Theophrastus* 7.18–7.20: Εὐδαίμων εἶ, ὃ Θεόφραστε, ὅτι πολλῶν ὄντων καὶ ποικίλων τῶν πάλοι λεγομένων οὐδέν σε διέλαθεν, ἀλλὰ πάντα διδάσκεις <σαφῶς>, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐξευρών, οὐ τὰ τῶν παλαιῶν διεξιῶν. The Greek text has been edited by Colonna (1958). The translations of the *Theophrastus* are adapted from Gertz, Dillon and Russell (2012).
 - 23 For example, *Theophrastus* 11.20–11.22, 14.19–14.24. On sarcasm as part of the argumentative strategy, see Gertz, Dillon and Russell (2012, 8).
 - 24 *Theophrastus* 16.20–16.22: Ταῦτά μοι καὶ πρότερον ἐφίζανοντα πολλάκις ἔστρεφε τὴν διάνοιαν· τῶν δὲ πατρῶν αἰδῶς καὶ συμμαχοῦντος ἀπορία κατείργουσα ἐπεῖχεν.
 - 25 Wacht (1969, 20–21) rightly points out that the omission of references to Scripture is the traditional method of Christian apologetics to refute the opponents by their own arguments.
 - 26 *Theophrastus* 65.16–65.18: καὶ οὐκ ἂν τοσοῦτον ἐκεῖνος εἰργάσατο, εἰ δόξαν ψευδῆ παρεδέξατο· ἀλλὰ παρὰ Θεοῦ τὸν λόγον μαθὼν, εἰς ἔργον μετὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ προφέρει τὸν λόγον.
 - 27 Cf. Plat. *Rep.* 3.388e.
 - 28 *Theophrastus* 67.18–68.8.
 - 29 *Theophrastus* 9.4–9.10: Νῦν δέ σοι περιτυχὼν καὶ τὴν ἔν σοι σοφίαν θαυμάζων, ἔτι μᾶλλον τεθαύμακα, εἰ ταῦτα καταμαθὼν ἔτι Πυθαγόρα καὶ Πλάτωνι, Χαλδαίοις τε καὶ Αἰγυπτίοις ἄνω κάτω συμπαραχθῆς, οἷγε μὴ ταῦτα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λέγουσιν ἅπαντες, μηδὲ τὰ αὐτὰ ἕκαστοι. Ἀπειρίας δὲ τάναντία λέγειν οὐκ ἐπιστήμης καί, ὡς ἔοικε, τούτου τοῦ δόγματος οὐ Θεὸς ἦν ἡγεμὼν, ἥ γὰρ ἂν ταῦτο πᾶσιν ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' ἀνθρωπίνη τις οἰήσις, ἐν ἣ πολλὰ τε καὶ ἐναντία ποικίλλεται.
 - 30 *Theophrastus* 21.11–21.15: Καὶ τίς αὕτη γένοιτο ἂν ἀρετὴ δουλεύειν ἡναγκασμένη ψυχῇ; Βίαιον γὰρ οὐδὲν κάλλιστον μάθημα οὐδ' ἀνάγκη τι γινόμενον πρὸς εὐφημίαν ἐπιτήδειον. Πῶς δ' ἀμείνων ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, εἰ λίθος ἦν ὅποι βούλοιτο ὁ τεχνίτης περιφερόμενος ἢ τινα φθόγγον ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ παρεχόμενος, ὃν εἰς τὴν ὅλην ἁρμονίαν ὁ Δημιουργὸς συντάττει καλῶς;

- 31 Cameron (2014) discusses to what extent literary dialogues in late antiquity reflect an actual debating culture.
- 32 Cameron (2014, 27) rightly raises the question about late antique literary dialogues of whether actual inter-religious dialogue was possible when the outcome of the conversation was clear from the outset and the discussion was intended to impose a certain version of Christian truth. Cf. also Kahlos (2007).
- 33 Aeneas, *Letter* 16.
- 34 See Hirschfeld (2004) for the archaeological record of the monasteries founded in the territory of Gaza from the fourth to seventh centuries. Some remains at Deir e-Nuserat south of Tawatha can possibly be identified with Seridus' cenobium. *Ibid.*, 76–77.
- 35 Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006).
- 36 See the comprehensive study by Hevelone-Harper (2005), Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006) and contributions in Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2004).
- 37 Hevelone-Harper (2005, 4–5); see also Binns (1994, 43–44) and Kofsky (2004, 261–263) on Palestinian monasticism and its role as a stronghold of monophysitism in the fifth century.
- 38 It has been suggested that the compiler was Dorotheus, who became a disciple of the Two Old Men in the monastery of Tawatha and later seems to have founded his own monastery. Hevelone-Harper (2005, 76–77).
- 39 *Letter* 643. The terse reply by the monk is actually only a small part of the whole narrative.
- 40 The manuscripts give the titles 'letters and answers' (mss. O and R) and 'teachings ... in writing' (P and S).
- 41 Originally, *quaestiones et responsiones* were a commentary-style genre of exegetical literature. Later it developed as a didactic instrument, akin to the apothegm. Basil the Great, for instance, presented the monks' rules in the form of questions and answers. The *Apophthegmata Patrum*, to which the letters of the Two Old Men are heavily indebted, are also presented in this style. However, question-and-answer literature was not exclusively Christian but already had a long tradition in ancient philosophy, and the style informed a wide range of literary genres, including epistles, lectures and dialogues. Cf. Papadoyannakis (2006).
- 42 Perrone (2004, 132–133) and Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006). Torrance (2013, 118–157) in his discussion of this label overstates the extent to which the letters represent a 'school of repentance' although he is right to stress the role of repentance in the Old Men's correspondence.
- 43 *Letters* 98 and 138.
- 44 See *Letter* 196.
- 45 See, for example, *Letters* 66 and 693: 'Εάν τις ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἐνθυμῆται τι καλὸν ποιεῖν καὶ οὐ δι' ἐρωτήσεως Πατέρων, οὗτός ἐστι ἄνομος καὶ ἐν νόμῳ οὐδὲν ἐποίησεν. Εἴ τις δὲ δι' ἐρωτήσεως ποιεῖ, οὗτος πληροῖ τὸν Νόμον καὶ τοὺς Προφῆτας. Ταπεινώσεως γὰρ σημεῖον τὸ ἐρωτᾶν. Καὶ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ταπεινώσαντος ἑαυτὸν μέχρι καὶ δούλου μιμητῆς ὁ τοιοῦτος. [...] That tenet is based on Scripture: Prov. 8:22.
- 46 That this is the audience response intended by the compiler is made explicit in the prologue to the collection.
- 47 Prologue 15–22: Οὐ γὰρ τὰ αὐτὰ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀρόττει διδάγματα. Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς σωματικῆς ἡλικίας ἄλλα βρώματα τοῦ γαλακτοτροφουμένου, καὶ ἄλλα τοῦ ἡβώντος, καὶ τοῦ προβεβηκότος ἕτερα, οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς πνευματικῆς ἡλικίας. Πολλάκις δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀσθένειαν τοῦ λογισμοῦ τοῦ ἐρωτῶντος ἀπεκρίναντο, οἰκονομικῶς συγκαταβαίνοντες, ἵνα μὴ εἰς

ἀπόγνωσιν καταπέση ὁ ἐρωτήσας, καθώς καὶ ἐν τοῖς βίοις τῶν γερόντων ἐυρίσκομεν. The translations of the *Letters* are adapted from Chrysavgis (2006/2007).

- 48 For this communication path, see the introduction to *Letter* 125 and *Letter* 225.
- 49 *Letter* 125 to the brother Theodore. Barsanuphius then has no choice but to invite this brother and others to a personal encounter.
- 50 For example, *Letters* 5, 239 and 570c. Cf. Perrone (2004, 136).
- 51 *Letter* 373: [...] Ὁ Γέρων γὰρ εἶπε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὅτι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ λαλεῖ. [...]. Cf. *Letter* 361, which shows John to be very strict in his assertion that it is God who speaks through the saint.
- 52 Brown (1971). Cf. the discussion in Howard-Johnston and Hayward (1999).
- 53 See also Kofsky (2004, 266–268), who also points out the differences between Brown's model of the holy man and the spiritual directors in Tawatha, most notably the lack of a clearly defined group of lay followers. Further Rousseau (1999), Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 82–83) and Perrone (2007).
- 54 Neyt (1974) applies the concept of charismatic authority – not the model of Max Weber, though – to Barsanuphius. Cf. Kofsky (2004).
- 55 Hevelone-Harper (2005, 6).
- 56 It is interesting to note that *Letters* 778a–d explain the relationship between master and disciples and the question of teaching authority in an exchange with a secular teacher. This demonstrates that the anchorites are fully aware of how far their spiritual direction differs from instruction in the secular realm.
- 57 *Letter* 362: Οὐκ ἀργῶς ἐπέμεινεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἀκούσας, οὐ καθαρῶς οὐδὲ ἐπιμελῶς ἐποίησε τὸ προσταχθὲν αὐτῷ. Καὶ ὀφείλει ἀνακαλέσασθαι τὸ σφάλμα καὶ ποιῆσαι καθαρῶς εἴ τι ἤκουσεν. Ἐὰν γὰρ ὁ Θεός ἐστιν ὁ λαλῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις, οὐ ψεύδεται.
- 58 In *Letter* 837, John prescribes how the bishop should phrase a letter to an influential man in Constantinople who wanted to conduct theatrical shows.
- 59 See Perrone (2004, 137–141) and Torrance (2013, 123–127) on the place of humility as imitation of Christ in the Old Men's spiritual direction.
- 60 This is made explicit in *Letter* 570c, which in fact is not one of the epistles, but a eulogy on Seridus by the compiler. It states,

he never for any reason answered back in any way; nor did he regard himself as an abbot, but as a disciple of the Old Man, owing perfect obedience to him, a sign of his extreme humility. This is why the Old Man regarded him as his genuine child.

(19–23, Ἐν οὐδενὶ γὰρ ὁλως ἀντεῖπέ ποτε, οὐδὲ ὡς ἀββᾶν ἑαυτὸν ἐλογίζετο, ἀλλ' ὡς μαθητὴν τοῦ Γέροντος καὶ ὡς χρεωστὼν αὐτῷ τελείαν ὑπακοήν, ὅπερ ἦν δεῖγμα καὶ τῆς ἄκρας αὐτοῦ ταπεινοφροσύνης. Διὰ τοῦτο γνήσιον αὐτὸν τέκνον εἶχεν ὁ Γέρων.) Cf. Neyt (1974, 61–63) on Seridus' position within the cenobium.
- 61 *Letter* 251: Φύλαξον μὴ χαρῆναι ψηφιζόμενος καὶ δεῖξον ὑπακοὴν τὴν ἐξορίζουσιν τὴν φιλονεικίαν τὴν μισουμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγαπώντων αὐτόν. Κράτει δὲ τὴν ὑπακοὴν τὴν ἀναφέρουσιν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ὁμοίους τῷ Υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ ποιοῦσαν τοὺς κτωμένους αὐτήν.
- 62 Papadoyannakis (2006, 97–98) shows that *erotapokriseis* often make the performative aspect and the interaction between master and disciple explicit; in doing so, the didactic format defines the teacher-student hierarchy.
- 63 For more detail, see Hevelone-Harper (2005, 44–51).
- 64 *Letter* 228.
- 65 *Letter* 225.

- 66 Neyt (1974, 57–58) and Kofsky (2004, 268–269) distinguish between two types of authority embodied by Barsanuphius and John, respectively, with the latter acknowledging the senior status of the elder.
- 67 For example, *Letters* 240 and 252. See Hevelone-Harper (2005, 16–17) and Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 20–24). Rubenson (1995) discusses the connections between Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism.
- 68 *Letter* 225 with Matthew 12:38–39.
- 69 See, for instance, *Letter* 370. On the collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* and their didactic purposes see Rubenson (2013).
- 70 Rubenson (2013, 5–6) highlights the almost unlimited adaptability of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* which makes ever new contextualisations possible.
- 71 *Letters* 74, 97, 142 and 360.
- 72 That seems to have been characteristic of the monasticism of Gaza since the time of Isaiah. Cf. Kofsky (2004, 279) and Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 99–100).
- 73 See *Letters* 470, 650, 771, 819, 836 and 837.
- 74 For example, *Letters* 722, 809 and 813.
- 75 *Letters* 664 and 665.
- 76 Hevelone-Harper (2005, 61–78) describes Dorotheus' path from novice to spiritual director.
- 77 See Neyt (1974) on the image of Dorotheus' spiritual formation that emerges from the letters.
- 78 Dorotheus, *Discourse* 4.57.
- 79 Interestingly, Zacharias' *Ammonius* uses terms reminiscent of instruction by question and answer, thereby displaying a formal resemblance to the Old Men's letters. See Papadoyannakis (2006, 97–99) and Champion (2014a, 266). That parallel again suggests that we should be careful not to separate instruction in a monastic setting too strictly from philosophical schooling in this cultural environment. For an outdated view that the letter collection is untouched by classical literary forms see Neyt (1974, 52–53).
- 80 See Larsen (2013) on elements of traditional Greek pedagogy in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.
- 81 *Letter* 469: Καλὴ μὲν καὶ θαυμαστὴ ἡ σιωπὴ πρὸ πάντων, καὶ αὐτὴν ἐτίμων οἱ Πατέρες καὶ ἡγάπων καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐδοξάσθησαν. [...] Ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ἡμεῖς διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀσθένειαν οὐκ ἐφθάσαμεν εἰς τὴν τῶν τελείων βαδίζειν ὁδόν, λαλήσωμεν τὰ συντείνοντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν, ἀπὸ τῶν ῥημάτων τῶν Πατέρων, καὶ μὴ βάλωμεν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς διηγήματα Γραφῶν. Καὶ γὰρ κίνδυνον ἔχει τὸ πρᾶγμα τῷ μὴ εἰδότη, πνευματικῶς γὰρ εἴρηνται, καὶ ὁ σαρκικὸς διακρίναι τὰ πνευματικὰ οὐ δύναται.
- 82 *Letters* 600–607, dedicated to the controversy over Origen. Cf. Hombergen (2004).
- 83 Kofsky (2004, 279–285) discusses further examples of the letters' negative attitude towards theology.
- 84 In *Letters* 694–701 John advises a layman on how to deal with a debate on heresy, in particular Nestorianism, and orthodoxy in public. He orders him to say what one knows about Scripture with humility and be brief since silence is always better.
- 85 *Letter* 373: Ψευδώνυμος γινώσῃς ἐστὶ τὸ πιστεῦσαι τῷ οἰκείῳ λογισμῷ, ὅτι οὕτως ἔχει τὸ πρᾶγμα. Καὶ εἴ τις θέλει ἀπαλλαγῆναι ἀπ' αὐτῆς, μὴ πιστευσέτω τῷ ἰδίῳ λογισμῷ, ἀλλ' ἐρωτάτω Γέροντα. [...] Ὁ Γέρον γὰρ εἴτε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὅτι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ λαλεῖ. [...]

86 Zacharias scholasticus, *Vita Isaiae monachi* 8.

87 It is worth noting here that Choricus' funeral oration for his teacher Procopius discusses in public the tensions caused by the encounter between classical culture and religion. The speech makes plain that this issue was a widespread concern among educated people in Gaza. See Choricus, *Or.* 8.21–8.22.

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